

# Dutchess County Department of Behavioral & Community Health

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County Executive



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## Rise in Fatalities Linked to Fentanyl

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### Situation: Increased Overdose Risk Involving Fentanyl

Overdose fatalities involving fentanyl are on the rise. In Dutchess County, 44% of accidental overdose deaths involved fentanyl (01/01/2016-09/30/2016) compared with just 3% in 2010. Nationally, fentanyl has contributed to more than 5,000 deaths since the fall of 2013.

Fentanyl is a synthetic, short-acting opioid analgesic up to 100 times stronger than morphine, and it carries a high risk of fatal overdose. Increasingly, fentanyl-related overdoses have been linked to illegally manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogues sold illicitly, mixed with or substituted for heroin **with or without the user's knowledge**.

Fentanyl is also being distributed as counterfeit pharmaceutical medications, such as Oxycodone, Xanax and Norco. The dose of fentanyl present in pills varies widely, which further increases overdose risk.

Patients with symptoms of opioid intoxication may be unaware they ingested fentanyl. Fentanyl is not detected by standard urine opioid immunoassays; therefore, opioid exposure should not be ruled out based on toxicology screen results. Consult your laboratory for preferred testing.

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### Clinical Information:

- Symptoms of overdose include lethargy, respiratory depression, pinpoint pupils, change in consciousness, seizure, and/or coma. Fentanyl may also cause sudden chest wall rigidity with rapid inability to ventilate or move the chest wall.
- Treatment is the same as for other opioid overdose, however, **larger than usual doses of naloxone (2-10mg) might be required for reversal** of the opioid effects. The half-life of naloxone is shorter than that of fentanyl; therefore prolonged observation of patients treated for overdose may be necessary.

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### What You Can Do:

- Warn individuals at risk about the increase in dangerous and toxic opioids on the street market. Discuss treatment options for those with a known opioid use disorder.
- The Department offers overdose prevention training and naloxone kits. Please contact the Opioid Overdose Prevention Program at (845) 486-3500 for more information or visit [dutchessny.gov/DBCH](http://dutchessny.gov/DBCH).
- Medication-assisted treatment also prevents overdose. Treatment locators are available at [www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov) or [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) or the Department's HELPLINE at (845) 485-9700.

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