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Dangers of Synthetic Drugs

Fentanyl is a major contributor to drug overdoses in California, including among youth. Fentanyl is an extremely potent and dangerous synthetic opioid, like heroin and morphine, and is laboratory engineered to be about 50 times stronger than heroin. This means even small amounts can lead to a fatal overdose. Fentanyl is powerful and difficult to detect.

People who make or sell drugs sometimes add small amounts of fentanyl to other substances in ways that are not noticeable to the user. Fentanyl is now commonly present in counterfeit pills sold on the internet posing as prescription drugs, such as Oxycodone, Xanax, Percocet, Vicodin, and Adderall. Fake prescription pills are easily accessible and often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms, making them available to anyone with a smartphone, including minors. Pills obtained through social media are especially dangerous and the Drug Enforcement Agency reports that 7 out of every 10 pills confiscated contain enough fentanyl to kill.

Fentanyl misuse may result in an intense, short-term high; temporary feelings of euphoria; slowed respiration and reduced blood pressure, nausea, fainting; seizures or death. Methamphetamine misuse may result in agitation; increased heart rate and blood pressure; increased respiration and body temperature; anxiety and paranoia. High doses can cause convulsions, cardiovascular collapse, stroke or death. Overdose may result in stupor, changes in papillary size, cold and clammy skin, cyanosis, coma, and respiratory failure leading to death. The presence of a triad of symptoms such as coma, pinpoint pupils, and respiratory depression are strongly suggestive of opioid poisoning.

With a fentanyl-poisoned drug supply, avoiding drug use is the surest way to prevent an overdose. The only safe medications are ones that come from licensed and accredited medical professionals.