



DATE:	01/28/2014
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Michael Wolf, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Fentanyl-Laced Heroin Compounds – Recommendations for Medical Providers in Southwestern Pennsylvania
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**Fentanyl-Laced Heroin Compounds –
Recommendations for medical providers in Southwestern Pennsylvania**

The Allegheny County Health Department is urging medical providers to be aware of increased toxicity of heroin that has been mixed with fentanyl. This product is apparently being sold as heroin and has been identified in southwestern Pennsylvania during the past week. The mixture of heroin and fentanyl produces an extremely potent opioid effect including coma and respiratory depression that can overcome the tolerance of chronic opioid abusers.

The following are recommendations from the Pittsburgh Poison Center:

- Patients with a known history of drug abuse should be warned of the potential danger of the use of these drugs, regardless of their tolerance, and encouraged to seek detoxification and rehabilitation services.

- Associates of drug users should be encouraged to activate EMS immediately upon identification of a possible overdose and provide rescue breathing when appropriate without fear of legal repercussions.
- Pre-hospital and Emergency providers should follow typical protocols when managing opioid related toxicity, including the use of assisted ventilation and administration of naloxone as indicated.
- Larger doses of naloxone than typically expected may be required. No unusual or additional toxicity is anticipated, but the severity of toxicity is expected to be increased.

Providers should also be aware that it is legal and appropriate to prescribe Naloxone (Narcan®) to opiate users so that it is immediately available if an overdose occurs.

The compound has been sold in bags stamped with various names: “TheraFlu”, “Bud Ice”, and “Income Tax.” The presence of fentanyl has been confirmed by the Allegheny County Medical Examiner.

Thus far, 22 deaths in southwestern PA have been associated with the use of heroin combined with fentanyl. This number of deaths in a short period of time represents a clear increase above the baseline number of overdose related deaths in this area.

The, Medical Examiner’s office of Allegheny County, Westmoreland, Armstrong, and surrounding counties, the Pittsburgh Poison Center as well as state and local police have been tracking the apparent sudden increase in heroin overdose related deaths in the last week.

OR:

The situation continues to be monitored closely by medical examiners, county coroners, public health agencies, law enforcement, poison control centers, and medical providers.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

This information is current as of January 28, 2014 but may be modified in the future.
