



**ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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## **Fentanyl Overdose Health Advisory**

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### **Situation**

The increased availability of illicitly-produced fentanyl, fentanyl-compounds, and fake pills is an emerging and ongoing threat to public health and safety. In 2019, 51 opioid-related deaths were reported in Alameda County from January 1, 2019 to December 16, 2019.

Many fentanyl overdoses occur among persons who may be aware that they are using fentanyl or a related substance. However, there have been recent anecdotal reports in Alameda County of an increasing number of suspected fentanyl overdoses among persons without a history of opioid use, such as cocaine and methamphetamine users. **Many persons who choose to use stimulants are unaware of the emergence of fentanyl laced compound drugs in the overall Bay Area drug supply, and the powerful potency of fentanyl.** In addition, many opioid pills, which are made to look like real prescription medications, are now made by counterfeiting organizations and may contain fentanyl.

Death from fentanyl toxicity can be more rapid than from other opioids, and overdoses may require more naloxone for reversal than other opioids – prompt peer response is essential. In addition, there are concerns regarding the increase in synthetic opioid and fentanyl derivatives that may be longer-acting, and may not be detected in routine urine toxicology screens. This alert provides awareness and actions for all health care providers in Alameda County to take when presented with a suspected or confirmed opioid overdose case at their facility.

### **Actions Requested of Clinicians**

1. **EDUCATE** patients with a history of substance use or who access ANY street-purchased drugs on the risks of fentanyl. This includes patients who use opioids, methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, prescription-like pills that are not prescribed by a health care provider and not dispensed by a pharmacy, and others.
  - a) **Prescribe and dispense naloxone to stimulant users as well as opioid users** or direct people to other harm reduction service providers where they can get naloxone. Patients should be encouraged to keep the medication with them at all times.
  - b) **Test dose: advise patients who use drugs to sample only a small amount when uncertain about new drug supplies.**
  - c) Initiate or refer patients with opioid use disorder to treatment. A [Substance Use Disorder Provider Directory](#) is available in several languages from [Alameda County Behavioral Health](#). Substance use treatment services are available for Alameda County Medi-Cal patients, those eligible for Medi-Cal, as well as those without health insurance who are medically indigent. Contract the Substance Use Access & Referral Helpline for a free screening and referral at 1-844-682-7215.
2. **TREAT** patients immediately with naloxone as clinically indicated for suspected overdose. If fentanyl is suspected, repeated doses may be needed.
  - a) Many urine toxicology screening tests are NOT able to detect synthetic and semi-synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. Treat empirically with naloxone when patients exhibit signs of opioid toxicity / overdose even if they reportedly only used stimulants. Do not delay treatment pending test results.
3. **REPORT** suspected and confirmed fentanyl overdose cases to the Alameda County Public Health Department at (510) 267-8020 M-F 8:30am-5:00pm or by email to: [ACPHDSurveillance@acgov.org](mailto:ACPHDSurveillance@acgov.org) or secure FAX at (510) 273-3744. Include patient's name, date of birth, age, and address of residence, and the name and contact information of individual initiating report.

### **Resources:**

- [East Bay Safe Prescribing Coalition](#)
- [Alameda County Behavioral Health Substance Use and Treatment Resources](#)
- [Substance Use Disorder Provider Directory \(English\)](#)
- [Medication Assisted Treatment \(MAT\) Resource List](#)
- [Tips for Persons Using Fentanyl](#)