



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2016
PH16-020

CONTACT: [Orville Thomas](#)
(916) 440-7259

CDPH Issues Health Alert to Stop Fentanyl-Related Deaths

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith announced today that CDPH issued a statewide [Drug Overdose Health Alert](#), in response to the number of overdoses and deaths reported by Sacramento County over a 10-day period plus anecdotal reports of similar overdoses in other counties, potentially involving fentanyl, in other counties.

“These overdoses and deaths are tragic reminders that unless you receive a drug at a pharmacy, you shouldn’t take it,” said Dr. Smith.

Fentanyl is odorless, and drugs contaminated with fentanyl cannot be easily distinguished from drugs that are not contaminated.

CDPH’s Health Alert requests that physicians and hospital staff:

- Voluntarily report suspected and confirmed fentanyl overdose cases to their local health department for reporting to the State. The information submitted will be used solely for public health surveillance. The reports should include name, date of birth, age and address of residence;
- Test for fentanyl when ordering drug screening on cases of suspected overdose;
- Be aware that Naloxone is effective in reversing the effects of fentanyl, however, we have received reports that it may take repeated doses of Naloxone over several hours to adequately treat fentanyl overdose, likely due to fentanyl’s long half-life; and
- Warn patients with a history of substance abuse about the risks of purchasing street drugs at this time. Fentanyl is colorless and odorless and cannot be readily detected with laboratory analysis.

While there have been numerous reports of injury and death in Sacramento County, the above steps will provide information about the severity of poisonings throughout California, added Dr. Smith.

www.cdph.ca.gov

