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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
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**DRUG OVERDOSE HEALTH ALERT:  
Fentanyl-Contaminated Street Norco®  
April 8, 2016**

**Situational Update**

Sacramento County health officials recently reported 48 overdoses of illicitly obtained drugs and at least 10 deaths over a 10-day period. It is suspected that these overdoses and deaths were the result of consumption of an opioid drug that strongly resembles the prescription opioid drug Norco®, but actually contained an undetermined amount of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opiate analgesic much more potent than morphine. CDPH is receiving anecdotal reports that similar overdoses and/or deaths, potentially involving fentanyl, have occurred in other counties.

While there is currently no established way to track fentanyl related overdoses in California, there is intense interest at both the federal level and locally in gathering this information. To enhance our understanding of the magnitude of severe adverse outcomes due to use of illicitly obtained fentanyl in California, **the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is requesting all healthcare facilities to:**

- 1) Voluntarily report suspected and confirmed fentanyl overdose cases to their local health department for reporting to the State. The information you submit will be used solely for public health surveillance. The reports should include:
  - a. Name
  - b. Date of Birth
  - c. Age
  - d. Address of residence
- 2) Test for fentanyl when ordering drug screening on cases of suspected overdose;
- 3) 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
- 4) 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 without laboratory analysis.





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## EMS SYSTEM ADVISORY #2016- 04/12

**TO:** Riverside County EMS System

**FROM:** Daved van Stralen, Medical Director *Daved van Stralen*  
Bruce Barton, EMS Agency Director *BB*

**SUBJECT:** Drug overdose health alert: Fentanyl contaminated Street Norco and other street drugs

**DATE:** April 12, 2016

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The following is an addendum to the advisory from the California Department of Public Health. Fentanyl and Fentanyl analogs are being used in place of and also blended with common street drugs. Fentanyl analogs (Acetylfentanyl, Methylbutyrfentanyl, Fluorofentanyl, Butyrfentanyl, etc...) are noted to be 5-15 times more potent than Heroin, and 80 times more potent than Morphine. Onset of effects once the drug is administered is approximately 5-10 minutes. Most users are unaware that Fentanyl and Fentanyl analogs are being used to make street drugs. Overdose and death may be more likely to occur, due to users not knowing the potency of these drugs. Studies note Naloxone is an effective antidote, but require larger than the standard dose to reverse effects.

- **Signs that differentiate between Acetyl Fentanyl and other opioid overdoses is :** An emphasis on serious respiratory depression, 2- 3 times the amount of Naloxone than the standard dose and therapeutic effects of Naloxone do not last, so reoccurrence of respiratory depression is more likely.
- **Routes:** Blotter Paper (such as used in acid/LSD use), Powder that can be mixed with Heroin and/or pills that can resemble other opioids, insufflation (such as "Huffing"), smoking, and IV.
- **Treatment:** Similar to all other opioid overdoses, Fentanyl analogs producing respiratory depression or apnea may require sustained airway and ventilatory support as well as higher doses of Naloxone. Administer as clinically indicated.
- **Refusing Treatment:** Treatment refusal is a greater risk for these patients. Any refusal of treatment for opiate overdose requires **BH contact** and law enforcement notification.
- **CQI:** All suspected opioid overdoses who refused treatment and/or who received greater than **6mg** of Naloxone will be a part of the CQI review process and reported to the EMS Agency. If any questions please contact Lisa Madrid CQI Coordinator for REMSA at [lmadrid@rivcocha.org](mailto:lmadrid@rivcocha.org) or call 951-295-1194.

