



Health Alert: Fentanyl Overdoses Among Persons Using Cocaine

February 5, 2021

At least 7 patients presented to Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital due to fentanyl overdose after using what they believed to be cocaine on February 2 and 3, 2021. Five have required intensive care. None of the patients had a history of opioid use. Testing was positive for fentanyl in all, cocaine in 3, and methamphetamine in 2 cases. Six of the patients resided in (5) or near (1) the Bayview district.

Fentanyl is an opioid that can be from 1.5 to 50 times more potent than heroin. Fentanyl overdose deaths have increased precipitously in San Francisco, with an estimated 502 deaths in 2020. Fentanyl overdose deaths frequently involve cocaine or methamphetamine. Fentanyl is commonly sold as a white powder or even in crystals that can appear similar to crack cocaine or crystal methamphetamine. While there is not evidence that other drugs are “laced” with fentanyl in San Francisco, fentanyl is often mistaken for cocaine or methamphetamine and sometimes sold as counterfeit pills, such as opioids or benzodiazepines. Given the risk of overdose from fentanyl, it is critical that anyone who accesses drugs outside of the traditional medical supply chain be aware of the risk of fentanyl and prepared to respond to an opioid overdose.

Actions requested of SF clinicians:

- 1. Ensure patients who access ANY street-purchased drugs have naloxone and are aware of the risks of fentanyl.** Either prescribe naloxone or direct people to the pharmacy at 1380 Howard Street or to syringe access sites. Patients should be encouraged to keep the medication with them at all times.
- 2. Initiate or refer patients with opioid use disorder to treatment.** Treatment can be accessed at methadone programs or through the [Treatment Access Program](#) at 1380 Howard St.
- 3. Advise patients who use drugs to test their drugs with fentanyl test strips (available at syringe access programs), use “tester” doses, and stagger drug use due to the rapidity of fentanyl overdose events.**

Substance Use Disorder Treatment Referrals:

- SFDPH triage center – [Treatment Access Program](#) (TAP) @ 1380 Howard Street; 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. weekdays
- Bayview Hunters Point Foundation Methadone Maintenance @ 1625 Carroll Street; Tel 415-822-8200; 6 a.m.-2 p.m weekdays



- DSAAM Bayview Van, 1676 Newcomb Ave (in the back); Tel 415-920-9008; 7 a.m.-9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. weekdays

- [BAART Clinic](#) @ 433 Turk St, 7:30am-12pm for same day methadone; Call 415-928-7800; ask for intake counselor

- [List of physicians who provide buprenorphine: https://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/practitioner-program-data/treatment-practitioner-locator](https://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/practitioner-program-data/treatment-practitioner-locator)

Poison Control Hotline: 800-222-1222

Naloxone: Naloxone is available at no charge from several sources.

- People who use syringe access services can access naloxone from those sites.

- Any individual can get naloxone from the CBHS Pharmacy at 1380 Howard Street, Monday-Friday walk-in 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. (no prescription required).

- Organizations seeking naloxone and training can contact Kristen Marshall at the DOPE Project: marshall@harmreduction.org

- [Naloxone prescribing information](http://www.sfhealthnetwork.org/employee-physicians/pain-management-resources/) (scroll down to Naloxone Prescribing, Education, and Awareness): <http://www.sfhealthnetwork.org/employee-physicians/pain-management-resources/>

Program Contact Information:

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