



DATE:	1/28/2014
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Michael Wolf, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Fentanyl-Laced Heroin Compounds – Recommendations for medical providers in Southwestern Pennsylvania
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
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This transmission is a “Health Advisory”: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

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Fentanyl-Laced Heroin Compounds – Recommendations for medical providers in Southwestern Pennsylvania

State and county health officials are urging medical providers to be aware of increased toxicity of heroin that has been mixed with fentanyl. This product is being sold as heroin and has been identified in southwestern Pennsylvania during the past week. Twenty-two deaths have been associated with the use of fentanyl-adulterated heroin. 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 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. These stamped bags may already be available in other counties across Pennsylvania or eventually may be made available.

The situation continues to be monitored closely, and additional updates will be sent as needed.

In the interim, 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.

Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and Prevention Point Pittsburgh also encourage providers to prescribe Naloxone (Narcan®) to all opiate users so that it is immediately available if an overdose occurs. Additional information on prescribing naloxone is at <http://prescribetoprevent.org/>

A fact sheet with additional information for opiate users has been posted at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/news/2014/20140128.aspx>

Additional patient education materials from Prevention Point Pittsburgh will be available shortly on the Allegheny County Health Department website: www.achd.net

Additional information can be obtained from:

Pittsburgh Poison Center: 24-hour Emergency number: 1-800-222-1222

Allegheny County Health Department: 412-687-2243

Pennsylvania Department of Health: 1-877-PA-HEALTH, 1-877-724-3258

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.
