



Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

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Health Advisory
Overdoses from Tainted Opioids
Recommendations for Management
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Over the last few weeks, numerous incidents of tainted heroin have been reported from western and northwestern Pennsylvania. The heroin is reportedly being cut with fentanyl and sold in packages marked in red ink with the street name, "Theraflu". There have been many overdose instances, including seventeen that resulted in death, that have involved heroin stamped as "THERA FLU". In addition, heroin stamps of "BUD LIGHT", "BUD ICE", "DIESEL", "COORS LIGHT", and unstamped product may also be tainted and are possibly derivatives of the "THERA FLU". Presently, it is unknown whether any of this product has made its way to the Philadelphia area.

Fentanyl and its analogs are much more potent than heroin and cause more severe opioid-induced intoxication and risk of death. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) is issuing this health advisory to alert clinicians to the possibility of opioid overdoses that may be caused by fentanyl-tainted heroin.

Treatment for opioid overdoses include standard protocols with the rapid administration of the narcotic antagonist naloxone by the intravenous route (preferred, although intramuscular or subcutaneous administration is an alternative when intravenous is not available). Greater doses of naloxone may be indicated in patients with fentanyl-associated intoxication. Clinicians should monitor effects of naloxone and provide additional doses as indicated, when opioid intoxication due to fentanyl is confirmed or highly suspected.

PDPH requests that providers report confirmed or suspected cases of opioid intoxication due to heroin-tainted with fentanyl to the Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6740 or 215-686-4514 after business hours.

SUMMARY POINTS

Fentanyl-Tainted Heroin

- Fentanyl-tainted heroin has been reported in western and northwestern PA
- Fentanyl causes more severe opioid-induced intoxication and risk of death
- Clinicians should consider fentanyl-tainted heroin as possible cause of opioid overdose

Treatment for Opioid Overdose

- Rapidly administer the narcotic antagonist naloxone by the intravenous route
 - Intramuscular or subcutaneous administration is an alternative when intravenous is not available
- Monitor effects of naloxone
 - Provide additional doses as indicated
 - Greater doses of naloxone may be indicated for patients with fentanyl-associated intoxication
- Report case to DDC by calling 215-685-6740

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Philadelphia Department of Public Health

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