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Sheriff provides info on Fentanyl

Editor's note: the following was submitted by Brown County Sheriff John Merchant

We are seeing a definite increase in fentanyl use and fentanyl overdoses in Brown County and I would like to bring awareness to county residents.

The fentanyl we have been seeing in our county is illicitly manufactured and the potency is so great, an amount as small as a pinhead can cause death. It is 50 times stronger the heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. It is the major contributor to fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the U.S.

If you consider that a sweetener or sugar packet found in restaurants contains approximately 1,000 milligrams, only 2 milligrams of fentanyl is considered lethal. To break it down, 500 deaths could occur from the fentanyl it would take to fit into the size of a sugar packet. Marijuana is also being laced with Fentanyl to increase and intensify the euphoric effect of the THC. Nationwide, deaths have occurred from fentanyl laced marijuana at an alarming rate.

There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Both are considered synthetic opioids.

Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain, especially after surgery and for advanced-stage cancer. However, most recent cases of fentanyl-related overdose are linked to illicitly manufactured fentanyl, which is distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, which makes drugs cheaper, more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous.

Illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF) is available on the drug market in different forms, including liquid and powder. Powdered fentanyl looks just like many other drugs. It is commonly mixed with drugs like heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine and made into pills that are made to resemble other prescription opioids. Fentanyl-laced drugs are extremely dangerous, and many people may be unaware that their drugs are laced with fentanyl.
In its liquid form, IMF can be found in nasal sprays, eye drops, and dropped onto paper or small candies.

Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. Even in small doses, it can be deadly. Over 150 people die every day from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl Drugs may contain deadly levels of fentanyl, and you wouldn't be able to see it, taste it, or smell it. It is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl unless

you test your drugs with fentanyl test strips. Additionally, many opioids can be purchased via the Internet; social media sites such as Facebook, Google, and Craigslist, among others; as well as a myriad of sites on the Dark Web. They are then shipped discreetly via commercial parcel delivery carriers such as the U.S. Post Office, FedEx, DHL, or UPS.

Illegally manufactured fentanyl is being found in many drugs. Illegally manufactured fentanyl is often found in counterfeit pills that are made to resemble prescription drugs. This includes prescription pain relievers, like oxycodone, and stimulants like ADDERALL®. You are at risk for a fentanyl overdose if you buy pills from any source that is not a licensed pharmacy. Illegally manufactured fentanyl is also found in other drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin. You are at risk of a fentanyl overdose if you use any of these drugs.

Fentanyl overdoses are often fatal. Because fentanyl is very strong, it does not take a lot of fentanyl to cause an overdose, especially for someone who does not usually take opioids. In 2020, the latest year in which data is available, nationwide over 80% of overdose deaths were connected to a synthetic or manufactured opioid like fentanyl.

What Can You Do?

Have a meaningful conversation with your family. Reject the notion that "it can't happen to you or your family." Talk aloud about the threat opioid abuse brings to your family. Commit to asking the tough questions. Invest in your family and community- future. Many intensely affected regions routinely host public forums, town halls, prevention activities at schools, community vigils, walks, and fun runs. Get involved and participate.

Speak up. Contact law enforcement when you suspect drug-related activity in your neighborhood. Successful policing relies on a whole-community approach to identify and bring drug trafficking organizations to justice. Keep any prescription drugs in your house secure and locked away, out of reach of others. Take advantage of national or local take back days sponsored by law enforcement or your local pharmacy to discard any unneeded drugs.

I hope some of this information is helpful to all. We intend to keep on doing everything we can do within our power to stay vigilant on holding anyone accountable who chooses to use or distribute this deadly drug in Brown County.

Sheriff John D Merchant
Brown County Sheriff's Office
709 Utah Street
Hiawatha KS 66434

(785) 742-7125