

Carfentanil – Fact Sheet

What is Carfentanil?

- Carfentanil is an opioid, and a fentanyl derivative
- Widely reported as being up to 10,000 times more toxic than morphine, the toxicity of carfentanil remains unknown
- Carfentanil is not for human consumption. It was developed as a sedative for large animals such as elephants
- Carfentanil has been detected in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario
- Carfentanil has been detected and linked to deaths in several provinces and U.S. states.

The dosage of opioids in counterfeit pills should never be considered safe and of uniform potency. A counterfeit pill ingested may produce no effect or it could be fatal. The risk of overdose death or injury to consumers who ingest carfentanil is immense. People who use substances occasionally or daily are at risk of overdose.

Although never tested in humans, the lethal dose of carfentanil may be in the order of 20mcg (micrograms), perhaps the size of one grain of salt. The lethal dose of pharma-grade fentanyl is approximately 2mg (milligrams).

Higher doses (more than 2 x 0.4mg/mL intramuscular injection) of naloxone may be required to revive victims of carfentanil poisoning.

It is essential that 911 be called and the victim be taken to hospital for emergency care.

Across Canada, bootleg fentanyls (fentanyl analogues) have been detected in a range of counterfeit pills and powders, including non-opioid drugs such as cocaine, crack cocaine, and crystal methamphetamine. In Ontario, carfentanil has been detected in pill, powder and liquid formats.

Many, if not most, consumers will be unaware of what their substance contains. A 2015 B.C. Fentanyl Urine Screen Study found nearly 29% of participants tested positive for fentanyl but 73% of those participants did not report using fentanyl within the previous three days.

Bootleg fentanyls have varying and higher toxicities when compared to morphine. Illicit fentanyl 'labs' pose potential health risks for first responders. Risks of accidental overdose are estimated to be low for EMS personal and in [health care settings](#).

The bootleg fentanyls are responsible for driving up overdose fatalities to record levels in British Columbia, Alberta and several U.S. States. In 2015, 707 people died from an opioid-related overdose in Ontario. Fentanyl detected deaths in Ontario account for 203 or 29% of all opioid-related deaths however it is unknown how many of these deaths are due to bootleg fentanyls versus pharma-produced fentanyl.

Two Bootleg Fentanyls Advisories were issued in Ontario in [June 2013](#) and [August 2015](#).

Resources related to the bootleg fentanyls are available at: www.drugstrategy.ca