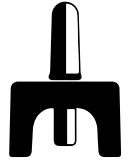


Carfentanil FAQ

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WHAT IS CARFENTANIL?

Carfentanil is a synthetic analogue of fentanyl, meaning it has certain modifications in its chemical structure that can make it more potent than fentanyl, heroin, or morphine. Like other opioids, carfentanil acts on the opioid receptors located throughout our brains and bodies, creating the sedative and euphoric pharmacological effects associated with its use. Carfentanil is not approved for use in humans and is most often used in veterinary medicine to sedate large animals. It is also produced illicitly and sold as a “street drug.” Illegally manufactured carfentanil has been detected in some samples of the counterfeit blue (M30) pills in New Mexico by the Adulterant Checking Program. It has not been detected in any other samples of substances.

WHAT IS FENTANYL AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM CARFENTANIL?

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is produced both legally as a prescription medication used to treat pain, and illegally as a “street drug” that has largely replaced heroin as the most commonly found illicit opioid in the USA. Unlike carfentanil, fentanyl does not have an additional “functional group” modification to its molecular structure. Currently in New Mexico, illegal fentanyl most often comes as a white or gray powder, in a variety of colors that can vary in texture including crystals, chalk-like chunks, powder, and sometimes as “fake black tar.” It also comes as counterfeit blue (M30) pills that primarily contain mannitol, acetaminophen, and fentanyl, though, due to the unstable nature of the drug supply, have been found to contain little or no fentanyl, a lot of fentanyl, and sometimes as many as 6 to 8 other unexpected adulterants, including carfentanil.

WHY DO THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO DRUGS MATTER?

Carfentanil is more potent than fentanyl, therefore, an individual could potentially overdose if they unknowingly use a substance containing it, regardless of previous tolerance to fentanyl. Additionally, carfentanil has a much more rapid onset of action and is longer acting than fentanyl. Because a smaller amount of carfentanil is needed to produce the same effects as fentanyl and due to its molecular differences, carfentanil is not always detected by Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS) or Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) machines, meaning it can give a false negative even when carfentanil is actually present.

DOES NALOXONE (NARCAN) WORK WITH CARFENTANIL OVERDOSES?

Yes, naloxone can reverse the symptoms of a carfentanil overdose. Research, and real-world experience have found that because Carfentanil has a longer duration of action (5.7 hours) compared to the short duration of action of Naloxone (30 to 45 mins), if given immediately, one or two doses should be sufficient to get someone breathing again, but additional doses of naloxone may be needed when the previous dose wears off. Timeliness is the key to successful overdose response which is why it's important to never use alone and make sure that your friends and family have naloxone. If possible, take turns so that others can intervene if needed. Remember that using multiple substances together, such as benzodiazepines and opioids, increases the risk of accidental overdose. The longer a person is not breathing, the more difficult it will be to revive them. If you don't have naloxone, you can still keep someone alive by performing rescue breathing - getting oxygen to the person is the most critical step. Calling 911 is always encouraged in case there are additional complications.

