



HEALTH ADVISORY OPIOID OVERDOSE TREND UPDATE

September 2017

The use of licit and illicit drugs continues to be a serious public health concern and safety issue nationally and in Boston. On September 15, 2017, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center issued an awareness bulletin detailing a recent increase in Narcotic Related Illness (NRI)¹ transports citywide. Last month, there were 457 NRI transports, a significant increase from 302 NRI transports in July and 307 NRI transports in June. Through the first 14 days in September, there were 243 NRI transports, nearly as many as the entire month of September 2016 (258 NRI transports).

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) encourages emergency departments, health care providers, substance use treatment providers, public safety, first responders, and the public to **exercise increased vigilance in promptly identifying suspected overdose patients** and taking appropriate action.

Fentanyl was present in the vast majority of deaths ruled on by the Medical Examiner's (ME's) office. The use of multiple drugs was also prevalent. Regional reports indicate that fentanyl is being mixed with cocaine and fentanyl tablets are being disguised as oxycodone. This suggests that cocaine and prescription pill users may be at an increased risk of an overdose.

Signs and symptoms of fentanyl overdose are consistent with opioid overdose: unconsciousness or unresponsiveness; respiratory depression or arrest; and pinpoint pupils. If you suspect an individual is experiencing an opioid overdose: call 911, perform rescue breathing and administer naloxone (Narcan). Giving naloxone will not have adverse effects on the individual if it is not an opioid overdose. Active users are encouraged to carry naloxone, make a safety plan, and avoid using drugs alone.

Emergency departments, health care providers, substance use disorder treatment providers, public safety, first responders, and the public are encouraged to **communicate potential increased risk and facilitate conversations about overdose prevention tips and safety plans**.

BPHC's Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution program trains drug users, families, providers and community organizations on how to prevent, recognize, and intervene during an opioid overdose using naloxone. Providers and residents interested in in-person or online overdose prevention training can contact the BPHC Overdose Prevention Program at (617) 534-5072 or visit bphc.org/overdoseprevention.

For information about recovery support services, residents are encouraged to call **311**, the City of Boston's confidential 24/7 referral center for addiction treatment and recovery service information and placement.

¹ A Boston EMS clinical incident identified as suspected to be related to narcotic use (including opiates and opioids) after review. Potential NRI cases are identified based on information entered in patient care reports by on scene EMT's or Paramedics, with confirmation on pinpoint pupils and altered mental status.