



FLASH REPORT

March 24, 2021

An Urgent Public Health Activity Report Within Jackson County

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Update: Overdose Alert for Jackson County

Jackson County Public Health issued an Overdose Alert the week of February 28, 2021. This alert was issued due to an increase in emergency department admissions, Medford Police Department responses to overdoses, and suspect fatal overdoses from illicit opioids during the weeks of February 14, 2021 – February 27, 2021.

Jackson County Public Health is keeping the current Overdose Alert in place at this time. Emergency response personnel have continued to respond to accidental overdoses in the community at a rate that is higher than expected since the alert was issued on February 28, 2021. There was one additional suspect fatal overdose reported the week of March 7, 2021. This is the fourth fatal overdose reported to Jackson County Public Health since the week of February 14, 2021. During the current overdose alert, some overdoses are suspected to be from the use of fentanyl.

Pharmaceutical fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, approved for treating severe pain, typically advanced cancer pain. It is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. It is prescribed in the form of transdermal patches or lozenges and can be diverted for misuse and abuse in the United States.

However, cases of fentanyl-related harm, overdose, and death in the U.S. are linked to illegally made fentanyl. It is sold through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect. It is often mixed with heroin, other drugs or sold as a counterfeit prescription opioid pill —with or without the user's knowledge. Street fentanyl can be in the form of white, gray, or tan powder, dropped on blotter paper, eyedropper, or nasal sprays.

We are encouraging the medical community, other community partners, family and friends, and people who suffer from opioid addiction to be aware of the increase in overdoses. There are actions that can be taken to reduce the risk of someone overdosing.

- Using illicit opioids, such as heroin and fentanyl increases the risk of overdosing. There is no safe way to use illicit opioids such as heroin or fentanyl, but precautions can be taken that may help reduce the risk. The street drug supply has always been unpredictable and inconsistent. Assume overdose risk no matter what drug you are using.
- Abstaining from drug use is the best way to eliminate the risk of overdose. Ask the person about their willingness to begin medication-assisted treatment or drug treatment. A list of resources can be found on the Oregon Recovers website <https://oregonrecoverynetwork.org/>. Call the SAMHSA's National Helpline 1-800-662-HELP (4357). This is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. The Jackson County Syringe Exchange Program provides referrals for medication-assisted treatment or drug treatment to people who utilize the program's services.
- It is critical to call 911 when someone is overdosing from opioids. If you use

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naloxone, the effects are temporary, and the person still needs medical attention. After the medication wears off, the person could fall back into a coma. If you call 911 for someone having a drug overdose, Oregon's Good Samaritan Law protects you from being arrested or prosecuted for drug-related charges or parole/probation violations based on information provided to emergency responders. If someone is overdosing from using fentanyl, it may take more naloxone to reverse the overdose. It can take about 2-3 minutes for the naloxone to take effect.

- Even people who haven't used in a while are at increased risk of overdosing. It is important to be aware of your tolerance and always use less.
- Have an overdose plan, make sure someone can get to you, and it is safest to use when you are with someone you trust. Always assume there is a risk of overdosing no matter how you consume illicit opioids.
- **BE PREPARED. GET NALOXONE. SAVE A LIFE.** Even if you do not use illicit opioids, but you know someone who does, you will want to carry naloxone in case you are in the position to use it on someone. Oregon law allows lay people to carry and use naloxone on others. You can get naloxone through these avenues:
 - Any pharmacist in Oregon can prescribe naloxone to you. You do not need a prescription in Oregon to access naloxone through a pharmacy. List of [Oregon pharmacies distributing naloxone](#).
 - Anyone who can prescribe medication can send a naloxone prescription to your pharmacy.
 - People who utilize the Syringe Exchange Program can receive free naloxone.
 - Free naloxone is available through Max's Mission and HIV Alliance.
- It is important not to mix drugs because drugs taken together can interact in ways that increase their overall effect and increase the risk of overdosing.

The Mission of Jackson County Health and Human Services is to plan, coordinate and provide public services that protect and promote the health and well-being of county residents.