

Data show synthetic opioid overdose deaths on the rise

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SPRINGFIELD – Today, on International Overdose Awareness Day, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is raising awareness of an alarming trend in opioid overdose deaths. Recent analysis of Illinois death records shows that overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, have increased more than any other category of opioids.



“While fatal overdose deaths involving opioids have increased in Illinois during the past five years, the number of deaths involving synthetic opioids has increased even more dramatically,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “It is important that we raise awareness and recognize this growing problem and work together to prevent these deaths and the devastating pain family and friends experience.”

In a major undertaking, IDPH analyzed the literal text section of Illinois death records to identify specific substances contributing to drug overdose deaths. The most striking result was the large increase in the number of deaths involving fentanyl, and opioids similar to fentanyl, which lead to a 910 percent increase in synthetic opioid overdose deaths between 2013 and 2016. Additional analysis of death record data, including the types of opioids (oxycodone, heroin, carfentanil, etc.) can be found in the latest edition of the [Illinois Morbidity and Mortality Bulletin](#). These data provide health professionals, law enforcement, and health care providers a more complete understanding of the opioid crisis and help identify strategies to combat it.

Thousands of people die each year from drug overdoses and they come from all walks of life. International Overdose Awareness Day aims to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of a drug-related death. It also acknowledges the grief felt by families and friends remembering those who have died or were injured as a result of drug overdose.

Take the time to learn the signs and symptoms of overdose and how you might be able to help.

You can find [Educational Resources – Overdose Prevention Materials](#) on the Illinois Department of Human Services website.