

September 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We are sending this letter to help with your awareness of a serious and ongoing situation in Saskatchewan. The Province is increasingly concerned about the misuse of opioids and opioid overdoses, some of which have been fatal. Sometimes this affects youth, and it is certainly affecting families. Talking with your child or teen is important so that they have a foundation to build good decisions about alcohol and drugs.

Fentanyl is 50-100 times more potent than other opioids, such as heroin, hydrocodone, oxycodone and morphine. It is prescribed for severe pain management, and health-care professionals must closely monitor the dose. When fentanyl is illegally made, sold, and/or used illicitly, it can only take one use to result in death. Illicit or street fentanyl is sometimes sold by dealers as another drug, or hidden in other drugs without the knowledge of the user.

Some slang terms for fentanyl include:

fake oxy, green beans, greenies, green apples, apples, eighties and shady eighties

How do I recognize an opioid overdose?

- Difficulty walking, talking or staying awake
- Blue lips or nails
- Very small pupils
- Cold and clammy skin
- Dizziness and confusion
- Inability to wake up, even when shaken or shouted at
- Choking, gurgling or snoring
- Slow, weak or no breathing
- Extreme drowsiness

If you think someone is overdosing, call 911 right away.

Deaths from opioid usage, including fentanyl, can be prevented through education, overdose recognition and response, and Naloxone (also known as Narcan). Naloxone is an antidote that can be used if an opioid-related overdose is suspected. It can help restore breathing within minutes, giving enough time for first responders to arrive. Naloxone is not a controlled substance, cannot be abused and has fewer side effects than an Epipen.

It's important to note that Naloxone treatment itself does not replace the need to seek immediate medical attention. Call 911 immediately if you suspect an overdose.

If you suspect a loved one is using opioids, you can access training for a Take Home Naloxone (THN) kit by contacting:

- **Publicly-funded THN Sites** (see www.saskatchewan.ca/opioids for a location near you to obtain a Take Home Naloxone kit).
- **HealthLine Online** at www.healthlineonline.ca

OR

- Talk to your pharmacist about a Take Home Naloxone kit.

For more information or to seek help:

- **Call HealthLine @ 811.** Specially trained staff are available to provide mental health and addictions crisis support, in a safe and confidential manner.
- **Ministry of Health:** www.saskatchewan.ca/opioids
- **Ministry of Health: Alcohol and Drug Support** to locate Addictions/Mental Health Services near your community.
- **How to talk to your teen about drugs (En) / Comment aborder le sujet des drogues avec son adolescent (Fr)**
- **Youth and prescription painkillers: What parents should know (En) / Les jeunes et les médicaments antidouleur sur ordonnance : ce que les parents doivent savoir (Fr)**
- **Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act.** Provides some legal protection for people who experience or witness an overdose and call 911 for help. **(En) / Loi sur les bons samaritains secourant les victimes de surdose.** Offre une protection juridique aux personnes qui sont témoins d'un surdosage ou qui sont en train de faire un surdosage et qui composent le 9-1-1 pour obtenir de l'aide. (Fr)

Note: This material is for information only and should not replace advice from an addictions or mental health counsellor, doctor or other health care provider.