

COUNTERFEIT DRUGS



SOURCE: DEA

An alarming and growing trend of the production, sale and use of counterfeit pills.

What exactly are counterfeit pills. They are pills that claim and appear to be a particular prescription medication but are not. They contain different substances and chemicals than the actual medication they are represented as being. Furthermore, many of these counterfeit pills have been found to contain illicit drugs such as, methamphetamine (meth) and/or heroin or the highly addictive and deadly pharmaceutical drug, Fentanyl.

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, one in four counterfeit pills with Fentanyl present contains a lethal dose. Only 2 milligrams can kill you, which is equal to just a few grains of salt.

While, the majority of these phony pills are made and developed in other countries, such as China, India and Mexico, counterfeit medications are also produced in the United States and the production of them in the United States continues to grow.

Generally speaking, these counterfeit pills are most often first sold and purchased on the “dark web” (Definition of Dark Web: The part of the World Wide Web that is only accessible by means of special software, allowing users and website operators to remain anonymous or untraceable) or through online social media accounts and connections.

Pain medications (opioids), such as Oxycodone, are one of the most common medications counterfeited. For those who grapple with an opioid addiction, the prospect of purchasing large amounts of Oxycodone or other opioids online without a prescription and for a fraction of the street cost is hard to pass up. These fake pills look nearly identical to the real prescription pills, the buyers/users are often unaware of how deadly they might be.

Chart below of pharmacy prescription cost vs. street cost.

Opioid	Avg. Prescription Price per pill	Avg. Street Price per pill
Vicodin	\$1.50	\$5 to \$25
Percocet	\$6	\$10 to \$15
Hydrocodone	\$1.50	\$5 to \$20
Oxycodone	\$6	\$12 to \$40
OxyContin	\$6	\$50 to \$80

Source: Portland Police Bureau/Oregon State Crime Lab

And while pain medications are the most widely counterfeited pills, medication pills such as Adderall, which is often prescribed for attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Xanax, which is often prescribed for anxiety disorders are also common medications that are counterfeited.

This is highly concerning as these medications tend to attract high school and college students. A large number of students have bought these pills online in effort to help them study and perform better in school or in attempt to treat a self-diagnosed disorder such as ADHD and/or anxiety. According to DEA Special Agent Debbie Webber, kids are buying pills not realizing they contain Fentanyl. "They are kids that don't have substance use disorder, they're naïve, they experiment, and this experiment becomes deadly for them," they're basically playing Russian roulette with their life".

Signs/Symptoms of an opioid overdose:

- Small constricted/pinpoint pupils
- face is extremely pale and/or feels clammy to the touch
- body goes limp
- fingernails or lips turn purple or blue
- vomiting
- unable to awake/unresponsive
- shallow breathing and/or heartbeat slows or stops

What you should do if you think someone may have overdosed on an opioid:

- **Call 911 right away**
- Administer naloxone, if available.
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing
- Lay the person on their side to prevent choking
- Stay with the person until emergency workers arrive

Please click on link below to see what pharmacies offer Narcan/Naloxone <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Behavioral%20Health%20Documents/NaloxoneMap.pdf> and/or contact one of the six Regional Behavioral Health Prevention Offices, in Nebraska, that serves your county. This is information can be found on the NDHHS website. <https://dhhs.ne.gov>

OpiRescue is also a free overdose support tool to recognize, reverse and report an overdose.

<https://www.rehabspot.com/treatment/paying-for-rehab/cost-of-addiction/>

<https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2021/05/21/dea-issues-warning-over-counterfeit-pills>

<https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Counterfeit%20Pills%20fact%20SHEET-5-13-21-FINAL.pdf>

https://journalstar.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/suspected-cocaine-dealer-linked-to-at-least-one-lincoln-overdose-arrested-police-say/article_89e343ae-0f48-57a1-8b7b-90fbafd14590.html

<https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/News/2021/8/19a>

Oxford Dictionary