

# THIS IS AN OFFICIAL NH DHHS HEALTH ALERT

Distributed by the NH Health Alert Network  
Health.Alert@dhhs.nh.gov  
April 28, 2017 1500 EDT (3:00 PM EDT)  
NH-HAN 20170428



## Carfentanil in New Hampshire

### Key Points and Recommendations:

- Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid that is 100 times more potent than fentanyl and has been linked to three New Hampshire overdose deaths. See the attached alert from the NH Drug Monitoring Initiative for more information.
- Carfentanil and other fentanyl analogues (synthetic opioids) can potentially be inhaled or absorbed when in powder or solution form. Anyone assessing or treating patients where drugs, drug paraphernalia, or unidentified substances are present should use caution to avoid exposure. If illicit opioids are suspected, these substances should not be handled and law enforcement should be notified.
- A risk assessment should be performed for each clinical situation, and based on identified potential risks providers should consider wearing at minimum gloves, eye protection, and a simple face mask in situations where carfentanil or other fentanyl analogues could be present.
- If direct processing or handling of carfentanil or other fentanyl analogues is expected, First Responders should review and follow NIOSH guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fentanyl/risk.html>.
- Naloxone is pharmacologically active against carfentanil and fentanyl analogues, but a carfentanil overdose will likely require multiple and/or higher doses of administration; basic life support may be needed until naloxone takes effect.
- Naloxone kits can be prescribed as an outpatient for patients and/or family and friends of patients who are at risk of an opioid overdose; however, at risk patients should be counselled about carfentanil and the possibility that initial doses of naloxone may be ineffective.
- For questions, please contact the NH DHHS Emergency Services Unit at 603-271-9465. Additional information can be found at: <http://anyoneanytimenh.org/>.

### Background:

Carfentanil is an extremely potent fentanyl analogue (synthetic opioid) that is being illicitly manufactured. It was designed in 1974 for use in veterinary medicine with large animals, but it is not approved for use in humans because it has been shown to be 100 times more potent than fentanyl.

Carfentanil and other fentanyl analogues are a serious danger to public safety, first responder, medical, treatment, and laboratory personnel. These substances can come in several forms, including powder (resembling powdered cocaine or heroin), blotter paper, tablets, and spray, and they can be absorbed through the skin or accidental inhalation of airborne powder.

**Additional Information and Resources:**

Information about substance use disorder treatment services:

- <http://nhtreatment.org/>

Information about NH pharmacies with naloxone standing orders:

- <http://anyoneanytimenh.org/new-hampshire-pharmacies-with-standing-orders/>

Information about prescribing naloxone:

- <http://anyoneanytimenh.org/community-resources/health-care-providers/>
- <http://www.nhms.org/resources/opioid#Naloxone>

Prior NH opioid-related HANs:

- <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/alerts/documents/opioid.pdf>
- <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/alerts/documents/opioid-2.pdf>

CDC HAN (from 8/25/16): <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00395.asp>

DEA notice: <https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq092216.shtml>

NH Statewide Addiction Crisis Line: 1-844-711-4357 (HELP)

To change your contact information in the NH Health Alert Network, contact Thom Flynn at 603-271-7499 or email [thomas.flynn@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:thomas.flynn@dhhs.nh.gov)

Status: Actual  
Message Type: Alert  
Severity: Moderate  
Sensitivity: Not Sensitive  
Message Identifier: NH-HAN 20170428  
Delivery Time: 6 hours  
Acknowledgement: No  
Distribution Method: Email, Fax  
Distributed to: Physicians, Physician Assistants, Practice Managers, Infection Control Practitioners, Infectious Disease Specialists, Community Health Centers, Hospital CEOs, Hospital Emergency Departments, Nurses, NHHA, Pharmacists, Laboratory Response Network, Manchester Health Department, Nashua Health Department, Public Health Network, DHHS Outbreak Team, DPHS Investigation Team, DPHS Management Team, Northeast State Epidemiologists  
From: Benjamin P. Chan, MD, MPH – State Epidemiologist  
Originating Agency: NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

**Attachments:** NH Drug Monitoring Initiative Alert

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# New Hampshire Drug Monitoring Initiative

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NHIAC Product #: 2017-2933

26 April 2017

**Purpose:** The NH Drug Monitoring Initiative (DMI) is a holistic strategy to provide awareness and combat drug distribution and abuse. In line with this approach the DMI will obtain data from various sources (to include, but not limited to, Public Health, Law Enforcement, and EMS) and provide monthly products for stakeholders as well as situational awareness releases as needed.

## Situational Awareness Alert

Sources: DEA, NH Forensic Laboratory, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Open Source Research

### (U) Carfentanil

#### **(U) Significance:**

Carfentanil has been found in New Hampshire for the first time and is extremely potent. On 4/25/2017 the medical examiner confirmed that carfentanil can be linked to three known deaths in New Hampshire. In addition there were three unrelated powder submissions to the state lab that tested positive for carfentanil. This provides a significant provider safety risk. This drug can be inhaled or absorbed when in the powder form. If drug paraphernalia is found at an emergency scene approach the situation with **EXTREME CAUTION**.

#### **(U) Overview:**

Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid approximately 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl. The presence of carfentanil in illicit U.S. drug markets is cause for concern, as the relative strength of this drug could lead to an increase in overdoses and overdose-related deaths, even among opioid-tolerant users.



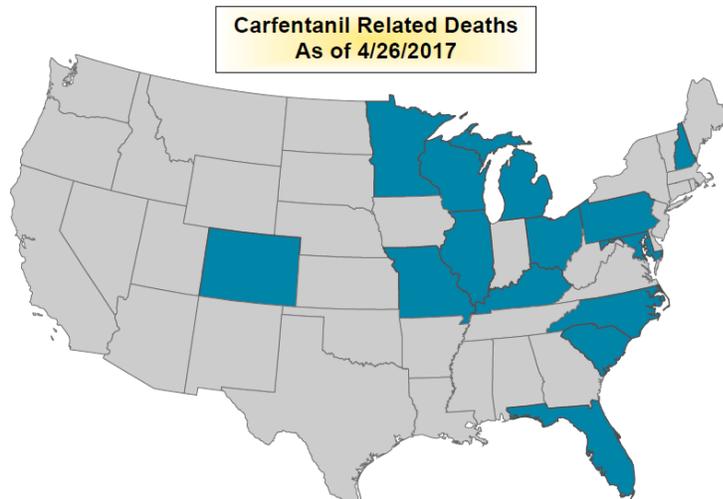
2 milligrams of powder next to a penny.

#### **(U) Lethality:**

Carfentanil is used as a tranquilizing agent for elephants and other large mammals. The lethal dose range for carfentanil in humans is unknown; however, carfentanil is approximately 100 times more potent than fentanyl, which can be lethal at the 2-milligram range (photograph), depending on route of administration and other factors.

#### **(U) Treatment:**

Carfentanil can quickly reach toxic levels in the human body. Exposure to carfentanil causes symptoms similar to those of opioid toxicity and overdose including pinpoint pupils, shallow breathing, dizziness, lethargy, loss of consciousness, nausea/vomiting, weak pulse, cold and clammy skin and heart failure. **Naloxone will reverse a carfentanil overdose, but it requires multiple doses according to reports from emergency personnel.**



**(U) Public Safety Information:**

Exercise extreme caution: Only properly trained and outfitted law enforcement professionals should handle any substance suspected to contain fentanyl or a fentanyl-related compound. If encountered, contact local authorities.

Beware of any signs of exposure: Symptoms include: respiratory depression or arrest, drowsiness, disorientation, sedation, pinpoint pupils, and clammy skin. The onset of these symptoms usually occurs within minutes of exposure.

Seek IMMEDIATE medical attention: Carfentanil and other fentanyl-related substances can work very quickly, so in the cases of suspected exposure, it is important to call EMS immediately. If inhaled, move the victim to fresh air. If ingested and the victim is conscious, wash out the victim's eyes and mouth with cool water.

Be ready to administer naloxone in the event of exposure: Naloxone is an antidote for opioid overdose. Immediately administering naloxone can reverse an overdose of carfentanil, fentanyl, or other opioids, although multiple doses of naloxone may be required. Continue to administer a dose of naloxone every 2-3 minutes until the individual is breathing on his/her own for at least 15 minutes or until EMS arrives.

Remember that carfentanil can resemble powdered cocaine or heroin: If you suspect the presence of carfentanil or any synthetic opioid, do not disturb the substance, as this could lead to accidental exposure.

## Be Part of The Solution

In 2015 1,000 Americans a day were treated in emergency departments for not using prescription opioids as directed, and 91 Americans died every day from an opioid overdose. The information you provide will be properly vetted before an investigation is started. Your call may be anonymous if you choose.

**You can save a life.**



# Drugs Destroy Families

## Be Part of the Solution

State Police Drug Tip Line  
**1-800-NAB-DOPE**  
 nabdope@nh.gov

Calls may be anonymous.

