Fake Pills and Kids: Are Yours at Risk?

Whether they raid the medicine cabinet at home, swap with friends, or buy from online sources, some of our kids are getting pills that are not for them. Doctors prescribe medications such as OxyContin, Xanax, and Adderall for medical conditions, yet some kids use them for other reasons. They think the pills will help them do better at school, be part of the group, or deal with stress.

But when kids use these drugs without a doctor's guidance—especially if they buy them online—they're taking a huge risk.

1) **Addictive.** All of these pills, even the pharmaceutical versions, can be addictive, especially for those who do not need them. **Addiction can lead to dangerous behaviors and destroy lives.**

2) **Fake.** Most pills you get without a prescription are **fake, made by drug cartels.** The phony pills look just like the pharmaceutical versions, so even professionals can't tell the difference without lab testing.

3) **Fentanyl.** Most fake pills—7 out of 10—contain fentanyl (DEA, 2022), a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin and **involved in almost all overdose deaths in the U.S.— including youth and people who haven't regularly used drugs.**

REAL Oxycodone **FAKE Oxycodone**

Kids Buy Fake Pills Online

Our kids have easy access to fake pills through websites, social media, and texting. Dealers use **emojis** to tell potential buyers they have pills. Just contact the dealer and provide payment—then pick up the pills right in your own neighborhood.

Talk With Your Kids

Peer pressure can be powerful, but parents and other caring adults can be just as strong. It may be challenging to talk about the dangers of drugs, but coming up with action steps and practicing them together in a safe environment helps kids make good choices. Want some help? See our fact sheet **"Talk. They Hear You."**

Facts About Fakes to **Tell Your Kids**

- Fake pills look like the real ones.
- Fake pills are easy to buy, widely available, and often contain fentanyl.
- Even a tiny amount of fentanyl can be **deadly.**

Be Prepared

Even if you're unsure if your kids or their friends are using, knowing what to do **in the case of an overdose** can save a life.

1) **Carry naloxone (NARCAN)**, a life-saving medication that can stop an opioid overdose. In the District, it is available free, without a prescription, and with no ID. Text **"LiveLongDC"** to **888-811** to find naloxone near you.

2) **Use naloxone** if you suspect an overdose. **It will not harm anyone**, even if they're not overdosing. And if they are, it can save their life.

3) **Call 911.** If you're alone, use naloxone first and then call 911. If someone is with you, have them call 911. DC has a Good Samaritan law that protects you when you call 911 or seek medical help for an overdose, **even if drugs are on the scene.**

Resources

- **Access Helpline at 1(888)7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357** helps District residents find substance use prevention, harm reduction, and treatment resources.
- DEA's **One Pill Can Kill** campaign has fact sheets and tools to help better understand the prescription pill epidemic.
- SAMHSA's **Talk. They Hear You.** has tools and resources to help parents, caregivers, and educators talk to young people.

LIVE LONG DC
Saving lives from the opioid epidemic
DBH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR