Fentanyl-Laced Substances Increasing Across Appalachia

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As fentanyl-related overdoses are continuing to rise across Tennessee and the broader Appalachian region, increased attention is being paid to how illicit fentanyl is being mixed into other substances without the consumer's knowledge. ReVIDA® Recovery, an outpatient provider specializing in opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment in Johnson City and surrounding communities, has published a new educational guide examining all of the chemicals that fentanyl is commonly cut with, why this practice is expanding, and how it makes a major contribution to overdose risk across the region.

?Fentanyl is a synthetic (man-made in a lab) opioid that?s FDA-approved for the treatment of severe pain. Doctors will prescribe this medication for short periods to manage post-surgical pain, but it isn?t a medication that?s prescribed for the long term,? the article explains. ?Anyone who takes fentanyl for long periods risks forming a physical and mental dependency on it.? When taken legally, fentanyl can appear as lozenges, nasal sprays, transdermal patches, or sublingual tablets. Illicitly, however, it is more often found in pill or powder form and is commonly crushed, dissolved, or injected. Because fentanyl is estimated to be 50 to 100 times stronger than any other opioids, even just small amounts can significantly increase an overdose risk ? particularly when individuals are unaware it is present.

According to ReVIDA® Recovery, the growing practice of mixing fentanyl into other illicit substances has made overdose prevention increasingly more difficult. The organization?s educational resource outlines how fentanyl is often combined with heroin, counterfeit pills, and even other opioids to increase both its potency and the dealer?s supply. This practice significantly raises the risk of accidental exposure, particularly for individuals who believe they are consuming a different substance altogether. Because fentanyl is so potent in small quantities, even minor variations in how it is mixed can result in unpredictable and dangerous outcomes, complicating both public health response efforts and individual risk awareness.

The article notes. ?Last year, 70,000 overdose deaths were attributed to fentanyl. A large reason for this is that, when people are taking it illicitly, they don?t know what?s in it.? When fentanyl is combined with other opioids, as the article explains, potency increases in incredibly unpredictable ways ? making dosage estimation extremely difficult. Reported signs of overdose associated with fentanyl exposure include gurgling noises, slowed or difficult breathing, blue discoloration of lips or under the eyes, pale skin, vomiting, sweating, unpredictable somnolence, coma, or sudden loss of consciousness.

Public health experts have emphasized that the continued spread of fentanyl into the illicit drug supply represents a long-term challenge for communities nationwide. As fentanyl mixing becomes more and more common, education around substances, overdose risk, and treatment access is increasingly viewed as a needed component of harm reduction and response strategies. ReVIDA® Recovery reports that greater public awareness of how fentanyl is distributed and consumed could tremendously help reduce accidental exposure and encourage earlier engagement with evidence-based treatment services.

About ReVIDA® Recovery

ReVIDA® Recovery is an outpatient medication-assisted treatment (MAT) provider that specializes exclusively in opioid use disorder. With locations across East Tennessee and Western Virginia, ReVIDA® Recovery offers MAT services using Suboxone® and Sublocade®, combined with required outpatient therapy and practical support services. The organization is committed to expanding access to evidence-based care while helping patients stabilize and maintain daily responsibilities.

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ReVIDA® Recovery Johnson City

We are committed to our patients? well-being. Every day at ReVIDA® Recovery, we challenge ourselves to continue building your trust, as you travel the path of recovery.

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