



# LEON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Walt McNeil, Sheriff

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[www.leoncountysos.com](http://www.leoncountysos.com)

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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## **LCSO Warns of Spike in Suspected Fentanyl Overdoses**

Sheriff Walt McNeil is warning the public about the risk of fentanyl-suspected drug overdoses after responding to five separate incidents since March 31. The seven patients in those incidents believed they were taking Oxycodone or Percocet pills. None of these overdoses resulted in a fatality and all the victims were revived by first responders equipped with Narcan, an opioid overdose reversal medication.

Fentanyl is a highly-addictive, synthetic opioid used in medicine to treat pain, it is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Even small doses can be lethal. Drug traffickers are increasingly mixing it with other illicit drugs, in powder and pill form, to drive addiction and attract repeat buyers. When added to pills, fentanyl can be impossible for the human eye to detect or differentiate between an authentic pill. This can create a frightening trend where many overdose victims die after unknowingly ingesting fentanyl.

The Florida Department of Health's latest data shows more than 6,150 people died in Florida in 2020 from overdoses linked to fentanyl and the preliminary numbers from 2021 show the number of deaths continues to grow. Nationwide, the CDC estimates that in the 12-month period ending in October 2021, more than 105,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, with 66 percent of those deaths related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Last year, in the United States fentanyl poisoning, was the leading cause of death for adults aged 18-45, surpassing suicide, gun violence, and car accidents.

LCSO reminds citizens to never accept or take a pill that a licensed physician has not directly prescribed to them. Also, be vigilant of the signs of a fentanyl overdose, which could initiate much faster and stronger than a typical opioid overdose. Signs of a fentanyl overdose include blue lips or blue fingertips, unresponsive to sternal rub, body stiffening, foaming at the mouth, and confusion.

"The Leon County Sheriff's Office Vice and Narcotics Units continue to work diligently with local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to arrest the people responsible for trafficking these dangerous drugs, but addressing the criminality of the problem is only part of the solution," said Sheriff Walt McNeil. "The increase in overdoses should be a wake-up call to our community, lawmakers, and other key stakeholders that stopping this epidemic requires a collaborative effort to adopt new strategies to confront the problem and find solutions to save lives."

To coincide with National Fentanyl Awareness Day on May 9th, LCSO is launching a social media campaign that will focus on messages of awareness, prevention, and support. The campaign will expand on the existing Drug Enforcement Administration's "One Pill Can Kill" campaign and include local resources throughout the community for tools like Narcan availability and education, in addition to information on the signs and symptoms of an overdose and how to respond. We will share more details about the campaign on our social media platforms in the coming weeks.

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