

ONE  
PILL CAN  
KILL

Department of Justice | Drug Enforcement Administration  
**FAKE PILLS FACT SHEET**

FAKE PRESCRIPTION PILLS • WIDELY AVAILABLE • INCREASINGLY LETHAL

DEA LAB TESTING REVEALS THAT  
**6 OUT OF EVERY 10 PILLS**  
WITH FENTANYL CONTAIN A POTENTIALLY  
**LETHAL DOSE**



**Fake pills often contain fentanyl  
and are more lethal than ever before.**

DEA officials report a dramatic rise in the number of fake pills containing at least 2 mg of fentanyl, which is considered a potentially lethal dose.

Drug traffickers are using fake pills to exploit the opioid crisis and prescription drug misuse. In 2021, 107,622 people died by drug poisoning in the United States.

Fentanyl, the synthetic opioid most commonly found in fake pills, is the primary driver in this alarming increase in poisoning deaths.

**Criminal drug networks are flooding the  
U.S. with deadly fake pills.**

- Criminal drug networks are mass-producing fake pills and falsely marketing them as legitimate prescription pills to deceive the American public.
- Fake pills are easy to purchase, widely available, often contain fentanyl or methamphetamine, and can be deadly.
- Fake prescription pills are easily accessible and often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms, making them available to anyone with a smartphone.
- Many fake pills are made to look like prescription opioids such as oxycodone (Oxycontin®, Percocet®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), and alprazolam (Xanax®); or stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall®).



**AUTHENTIC**  
oxycodone  
M30 tablets



**\*FAKE**  
oxycodone M30 tablets  
containing fentanyl

For more information about fake pills, go to [DEA.gov/OnePill](https://www.dea.gov/OnePill)

Data as of December 2022



\*Photos of fake pills do not represent all available fake pills.

## ONE PILL CAN KILL INITIATIVE

## Overview and Key Results

ONE  
PILL CAN  
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## DEA'S RESPONSE

DEA's mission is to protect the safety and health of American communities from the harm, violence, and overdoses driven by criminal drug networks.

## Public Safety Alert

DEA issued a Public Safety Alert warning the public of the dramatic increase in deadly, fake pills.



## PUBLIC SAFETY ALERT

Sharp Increase in Fake Prescription Pills Containing Fentanyl and Methamphetamine  
DEA Warns that International and Domestic Criminal Drug Networks are Flooding the United States with Lethal Counterfeit Pills

September 27, 2021 – The Drug Enforcement Administration warns the American public of the alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine. International and domestic criminal drug networks are mass-producing fake pills, falsely marketing them as legitimate prescription pills, and killing unsuspecting Americans. These counterfeit pills are easy to purchase, widely available, and often contain deadly doses of fentanyl. Pills purchased outside of a licensed pharmacy are illegal, dangerous, and potentially lethal. This alert does not apply to legitimate pharmaceutical medications prescribed by medical professionals and dispensed by pharmacists.

DEA and its law enforcement partners are seizing deadly fake pills at record rates. More than 9.5 million counterfeit pills were seized so far this year, which is more than the last two years combined. Officials report a dramatic rise in the number of counterfeit pills containing at least two milligrams of fentanyl, which is considered a deadly dose. The number of DEA-seized counterfeit pills with fentanyl has jumped nearly 430 percent since 2019, a staggering increase. DEA laboratory testing further reveals that today, two out of every five pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose. Additionally, methamphetamine is increasingly being pressed into counterfeit pills.

Some of the most common counterfeit pills are made to look like prescription opioids such as oxycodone (Oxycontin), Percocet®, hydrocodone (Vicodin®), and alprazolam (Xanax®) or stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall®). Fake prescription pills are widely accessible and often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms – making them available to anyone with a smartphone, including teens and young adults. These counterfeit pills have been seized by DEA in every U.S. state, and in unprecedented quantities.

Drug traffickers are using fake pills to exploit the opioid crisis and prescription drug misuse in the United States, bringing overdose deaths and violence to American communities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last year more than 93,000 people died of drug overdoses in the United States, marking the largest number of drug-related deaths ever.

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## Phase 1 / Public Safety Surge Aug. 3 - Sept. 27, 2021

A public safety surge to address the alarming increase in the availability of fentanyl-laced fake pills.

## Phase 1 Seizures



1.8 Million  
Fake Pills



1570 lbs  
Fentanyl



8840 lbs  
Meth



810  
Arrests



158  
Weapons

## Phase 2 / Public Safety Surge Sept. 28 - Dec. 14, 2021

A second public safety surge targeting deadly, fake pills – and their increasing availability on social media platforms.

## Phase 2 Seizures



8 Million  
Fake Pills



1500 lbs  
Fentanyl

## The Message to Americans

- 1 Never take medicine that wasn't prescribed to you by your doctor and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist.
- 2 Talk to your family and friends about the dangers of drugs online.
- 3 Spread the word that One Pill Can Kill.

## The seizures were directly linked to:



46 overdoses  
& 39 overdose  
deaths.



At least 76 of the cases  
involved drug  
traffickers using social  
media applications



32 cases had  
direct ties to the  
major Mexican  
drug networks



# FENTANYL IS LETHAL

It isn't a high. It isn't a game. Don't be a statistic.

FENTANYL KILLS  
1 PERSON  
EVERY  
9 MINUTES

**#1**

leading cause of death in 18 to 45 year-olds

**2 mg**

is a lethal dose of fentanyl

**60%**

of pills contain a lethal dose

**107,375**

people died from drug overdoses in 2021

**72,000**

of those died from fentanyl

**99%**

of fentanyl overdoses are an accident

**FENTANYL KILLED MORE PEOPLE IN 2021 THAN  
SUICIDE, GUN VIOLENCE AND CAR ACCIDENTS.**

FENTANYL KILLS **175** PEOPLE EVERY DAY



**3** OUT OF EVERY **5** PILLS  
WITH FENTANYL CONTAIN A POTENTIALLY  
LETHAL DOSE

This is 2 mg



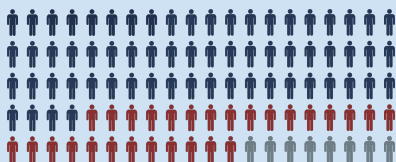
## AT A GLANCE

A nationwide surge in fake prescription pills, made and marketed by criminal drug networks, is driving harm, violence, and overdoses across the U.S.

DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS  
OVER THE LAST YEAR

The U.S. overdose epidemic is driven by fentanyl & methamphetamine

64% of overdose deaths involved synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl



28% involved psychostimulants, primarily methamphetamine



## THE THREAT

## 1 Fentanyl

Criminal drug networks are flooding the U.S. with fentanyl and fentanyl-laced fake pills, driving the nationwide overdose crisis.

15,000 lbs  
OF FENTANYL  
SEIZED IN 2021

Enough to supply a potentially lethal dose to **every member of the U.S. population**

## 2 Counterfeit Prescription Pills

Fake pills, marketed as legitimate prescription pills to deceive the American public, are easy to purchase and widely available. Many counterfeit pills are made to look like prescription opioids such as oxycodone (Oxycontin®, Percocet®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), and alprazolam (Xanax®); or stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall®).



Authentic Oxycodone



Counterfeit Oxycodone

20.4 Million Fake Pills Seized in 2021

Today, 4 out of 10 DEA-tested fake pills with fentanyl contain a potentially deadly dose.

## 3 The Social Media Threat

Drug dealers are now harnessing the accessibility and anonymity of social media apps to push these deadly drugs into our communities faster, cheaper, and easier than ever before.



Known code words and emojis are used to market and sell illicit and deadly drugs on social media.





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## FAKE PILLS FACT SHEET

### **Fake pills are widely available across every state in the Country.**

- DEA and its law enforcement partners are seizing deadly fake pills at record rates.
- Fake pills have been seized in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- Drug trafficking is also inextricably linked with violence.

In 2022, DEA seized more than 50.6 million

**50,600,000**

**fake pills often laced with fentanyl  
-more than double the amount of fentanyl  
pills seized in 2021-**



The **only safe medications** are ones that come from **licensed and accredited medical professionals.**

DEA warns that pills purchased outside of a licensed pharmacy are illegal, dangerous, and potentially lethal.

For more information about fake pills, go to **DEA.gov/OnePill**

Data as of December 2022



The Drug Enforcement Administration ensures the safety and health of the American public by fighting against violent criminal drug networks and foreign cartels trafficking in illicit drugs. To accomplish that mission, the Drug Enforcement Administration employs approximately 10,000 men and women throughout the world—Special Agents, diversion investigators, intelligence analysts, and chemists—across more than 250 domestic offices in 23 U.S. divisions and more than 90 foreign offices in nearly 70 countries.