



Media Release

For immediate release: June 13, 2022

Contact: Stephanie Badillo-Sanchez, Communications Specialist

509-941-7364

Drug Overdose Deaths Continue to Increase in Yakima County

Yakima, WA- In Yakima County, the number of drug overdose deaths continued to increase in 2021. According to data from the Yakima County Coroner's Office, 98 residents died of a drug overdose last year, representing a 34% increase from the 73 deaths reported in 2020.

In line with statewide and national trends, opioids have become the primary factor in overdose deaths in Yakima County. Of the overdose deaths that occurred in 2020 and 2021, more than 60% involved opioids, with fentanyl being the most common opioid involved in those deaths.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Although fentanyl is commonly used in medical settings to manage severe pain; it is also manufactured illicitly and has been increasingly found in other drugs, such as heroin, methamphetamine, and counterfeit prescription pills. It is nearly impossible to tell if a drug has been laced with fentanyl, which increases the risk of accidental overdose and death. Due to its high potency, even small doses of fentanyl can lead to an overdose. Potential signs of an opioid overdose include:

- Small, constricted "pinpoint pupils"
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold and/or clammy skin
- Discolored skin (especially in lips and nails)

If someone is experiencing an overdose, call 9-1-1 immediately. Washington State's Good

Samaritan Law protects anyone who seeks medical assistance for a drug overdose against drug possession charges.

If you or someone you know is at increased risk for opioid overdose, consider carrying naloxone. Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can quickly reverse the effects of opioid overdose. In Washington State, naloxone is available with a prescription from a health care provider and through the [Statewide Standing Order](#) which allows anyone to get naloxone from a local pharmacy without a prescription. To obtain naloxone using the statewide standing order, individuals may print a copy of the standing order and present it at their local pharmacy.

Community members are also encouraged to properly dispose of unused or expired medications at medication take-back locations in Yakima County. More information is available at: www.TakeBackYourMeds.org.

Quotes

“Overdose can happen to anyone, and it is a public health concern that is critical to address. We continue to be worried about the increase of overdose deaths throughout our county and encourage community members to join us in creating awareness about the signs of an overdose, and how to use naloxone to reverse the effects of an overdose. If you need help for substance abuse or know someone who does, call the Washington Recovery Help Line at **1-866-789-1511**. - Andre Fresco, Executive Director, Yakima Health District

“Counterfeit pills are extremely deadly and are causing considerable amount of pain and suffering to residents in Yakima County, as well as throughout Washington and the United States.” -Jim Curtice, Yakima County Coroner

Additional Information:

[Washington State Department of Health: Opioids](#)

[United States Drug Enforcement Administration: Fentanyl](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Lifesaving Naloxone](#)

[Washington State Department of Health: Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone](#)

[Find a Medicine Take-Back Location – Take Back Your Meds](#)

[Washington Recovery Help Line 1-866-789-1511](#)

###