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Illinois Poison Center Highlights Dangers of Synthetic Opioids, Designer Drugs

IPC Sites Increase in Calls During Summer Months

CHICAGO – Summer months are a perfect opportunity to enjoy outdoor concerts, music festivals and sporting events, but the use of recreational drugs can be common at these events. The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is reminding the public about the risks associated with recreational drugs, especially synthetic recreational drugs. IPC handles 80,000 calls annually, with an increase in calls during summer months, ranging from bites, stings and chemical ingestions to drug overdoses.

Recreational drugs that are often reported to the IPC can span a wide range of substances, including:

- Fentanyl masquerading as prescription drugs (such as Percocet, OxyContin, Xanax or Adderall) or other illicit drugs like Ecstasy (MDMA). Fentanyl is pressed into counterfeit pills and can cause injury to unsuspecting buyers.
- Potent designer benzodiazepines sold as counterfeit prescription benzodiazepines or mixed into other illicit drugs.
- Designer hallucinogens with similar structure or effects as MDMA, but with more toxic effects. The drugs can cause agitation, psychosis or extremely elevated body temperatures.
- Hemp derived psychoactive substances such as Delta-8, which are synthetic forms related to cannabis.

Earlier this month, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) [issued](#) joint warning letters to five companies for illegally selling copycat food products containing delta-8 THC and introducing them into the marketplace in violation of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act).

“Overdose cases still remain a concern across the nation and much of the surge can be attributed to synthetic drugs,” said IPC Medical Director, Michael Wahl, M.D. “These drugs are widely available and easily accessible to youth, especially at parties, festivals and special events. It’s important that the public remembers that experimenting with street drugs can create irreversible health issues and can also be fatal.”

Here are IPC's safety recommendations:

- Do not take prescription drugs not provided by your physician, pharmacist or other healthcare provider.
- Make sure that naloxone is available for people who may ingest or snort prescription drugs from non-medical sources. Naloxone is the reversal agent for opioid overdose and can work for individuals who have overdosed on fentanyl.
- Call 911 when there is an overdose: Rapid emergency response is essential to the care and recovery of someone who has overdosed on fentanyl. The Emergency Medical Services Access Law, commonly known as Illinois' "Good Samaritan Law," allows individuals to seek emergency medical help for an overdose without risking criminal liability for possession.

For more information on synthetic drugs and other topics, click [here](#) to visit the Illinois Poison Center website. You can also find information on IDPH's website by clicking [here](#).

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline (1-800-222-1222) staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.