PROTECTING YOURSELF

Tips for First Responders

As Carfentanil is surfacing in more communities around the country, it poses a very real threat to the people who inject or snort it under the assumption it's another drug, but also to first responders, police, and hospital personnel. If encountered, anyone can use the following to minimize a deadly outcome:

- Carfentanil and other fentanyl-related products can come in a variety of forms: powder, blotter paper, tablets, or even spray. They can be absorbed through the skin or can accidentally be inhaled.
- Be aware of signs of exposure: clammy skin, pinpoint pupils, drowsiness, disorientation, and slowed or halted breathing.
- If inhaled, move the victim to fresh air. If ingested but still conscious, wash out eyes and mouth with cool water. This may buy them some time until naloxone can be administered.
- Naloxone is an antidote for overdose by opioids. It can reverse the effects of overdose, although multiple doses may be necessary.
- Carfentanil can look like powdered cocaine or heroin so do not take samples or disturb the samples, since it can lead to you accidentally inhaling it.



TEST YOURSELF

1. How much more powerful than morphine is Carfentanil?
   a. 1,000 times b. 5,000 times
   c. 10,000 times d. 50,000 times
2. What is the antidote for opioid overdose?
   a. Caffeine b. Methamphetamine
   c. Narcan d. Water
3. Which of the following is NOT a form that Carfentanil can come?
   a. Brown, clumpy powder b. Tablets
   c. Spray d. Blotter paper
4. Even an elephant can suffer negative side effects of Carfentanil.
   a. True b. False
5. It's safe to eat a large animal, like a bison, that's been treated with Carfentanil because the drug has no effect on them and just passes through their system very quickly.
   a. True b. False

Answers: 1.C 2.C 3.A 4.A 5.B

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CARFENTANIL



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WHAT IS CARFENTANIL?

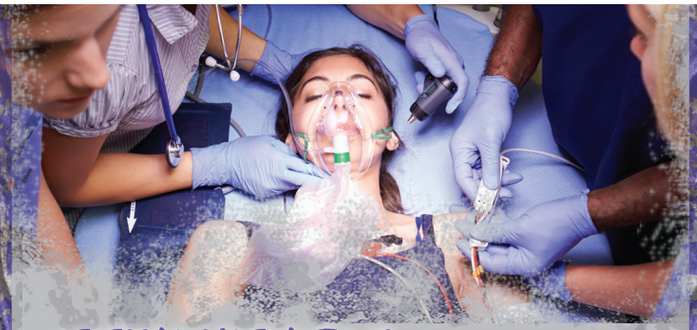
Carfentanil, aka elephant tranquilizer, is an extremely potent and lethal form of fentanyl. Designed in the 1970s, Carfentanil falls into the opioid category of drugs, meaning its main function is to suppress the central nervous system to relieve pain. And for an elephant that weighs around 13,000 pounds, Carfentanil works pretty well as a tranquilizer. For a human, let's just say that one single milligram—an amount impossible to see with the naked eye—is enough to kill you.

Scientists agree that Carfentanil may be the strongest medication currently developed. Although morphine, for example, can be deadly if abused, it's still used by doctors for pain. Fentanyl, which is what Carfentanil is derived from, is approximately 50-100 times more powerful than morphine. Take it a step further, and you get Carfentanil, which is estimated to be 10,000 times more powerful than morphine. Like other opioids, Carfentanil can cause many of the same side effects like itchiness, nausea, confusion, and sedation, but the most common side effect is respiratory depression, which can lead to death almost immediately.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Carfentanil quickly binds to the opioid receptors in the brain and floods the central nervous system with dopamine. So while it's possible you may initially have feelings of euphoria and drowsiness, overdose symptoms occur very quickly. Opioid receptors also control breathing rate, which is why opioid overdoses are typically characterized by depressed, irregular, or stopped breathing. Since so many people die their first time trying Carfentanil, addiction is unlikely to happen. However, people who do struggle with addition to opioids, particularly heroin, are at a greater risk of encountering the drug.





NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS

Whereas some opioids are safe for human consumption with a doctor's prescription, that will never be the case for Carfentanil. Used to tranquilize and sedate elephants and other large animals, death is not only possible for humans who try to use Carfentanil but extremely probable. When veterinarians and wildlife biologists use Carfentanil, they have to be extremely careful to wear protective gloves, respirators, and other safety gear to ensure the drug can't be breathed in or absorbed through their skin. Likewise, scientists in the lab and first responders in the field also have to use protective gear to prevent exposure. Narcan, also called naloxone, is carried by laboratories, first responders, and physicians in emergency rooms to reverse the effects of respiratory depression. Police officers have even started wearing thicker, more protective gloves and masks to prevent them from inhaling substances when observing crime scenes or places where a person have overdosed.

UNEXPECTED EPIDEMIC



No rational person wakes up one day and decides to inject themselves with elephant tranquilizer. So why are so many people dying from Carfentanil overdose? Carfentanil is much cheaper to produce than less potent drugs, so it's often found mixed with heroin to increase the potency and amount of a dealer's supply. The CDC is warning the public about a new drug, carfentanil, that is 100 times more potent than fentanyl. Carfentanil-related deaths rose by more than 700% in the past year. Between January and June 2023, there were 29 fatal overdoses, a number that skyrocketed to 238 between January and June 2024.. Carfentanil is an odorless, white powder, which makes it undetectable without a toxicology report.

ACCIDENTAL EXPOSURE

Humans are so susceptible to Carfentanil that Yellowstone National Park rangers insist that bison who have been sedated with Carfentanil shouldn't be consumed by humans because the drug can pass through the tissue and cause an overdose. First responders, emergency room personnel, and police are also more diligent in wearing appropriate safety gear to minimize their risks of exposure.

PATRICK'S STORY



After 15 long years as an EMS first responder, Patrick thought he had seen and dealt with pretty much everything. He was used to death, but he was used to miraculous things happening as well. Teenagers who were hit by a drunk driver yet still walking away without a scratch. A dad having a heart attack yet still being revived after minutes with no heartbeat. Despite all this, Patrick never anticipated anything like what was about to happen.

He was responding to a 911 call of what appeared to be an opioid overdose. This wasn't anything he hadn't seen before, unfortunately, so he had his Narcan ready to go. His brand new partner, Susan, was sitting alongside him shaking in the passenger seat. "We'll assess the situation as fast as we can then head over to the hospital," Patrick said almost as if he were talking to his daughter. Susan, with almost no color in her face, could only shake her head in a reply.

As they walked up to the house, the girl who had made the call came stumbling out. Patrick noticed immediately how wasted she looked. "Probably a heroin junkie," Patrick thought to himself. She led them into the living room where there was a man on the floor. He had some white powder under his nose, so Patrick put on his gloves and started working on the guy. Seconds later, he started to feel extremely tired, even heavier. Confused, he suddenly felt too tired to even hold up the syringe of Narcan. The last thing he remembered, he was falling to the floor beside the man he was trying to save.

Hours later, he woke up in a hospital bed with Susan sitting beside him. "You really gave me a run for my money tonight. I wasn't sure if you were going to make it," she said relieved. "We're waiting on the toxicology report, but it seems whatever that guy was on affected you too. Luckily, you packed enough Narcan for me to give to both of you, but I don't think the other guy made it. I heard the nurses talk about it possibly being that new drug, Carfentanil. Just a milligram is enough to kill you, and who knows how much that guy snorted. I'm just glad you're ok."