



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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John T. Jansen, Director  
Department of Human Services

Patrice Hall, Medical Examiner  
Office of the Medical Examiner  
Kenosha County Public Safety Building  
1000 55<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140  
Phone: (262) 653-3869  
Fax: (262) 653-3877

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News release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Patrice Hall, Medical Examiner  
262-653-3869

## **Medical examiner warns of dangers of drug use after 3 suspected overdose deaths in 4 days**

The Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office has responded to three suspected overdose deaths in four days, renewing concerns about the dangers of illegal drugs that may be laced with fentanyl and other deadly substances.

Medical Examiner Patrice Hall said the first of the three most recent suspected overdose deaths occurred Friday. Two of the cases were in the City of Kenosha; one was in the Village of Pleasant Prairie.

While the specific causes of these deaths are to be determined pending toxicology results, Hall said her office is seeing a continuing trend of fentanyl being added to other substances, often without the user's knowledge.

"We're seeing fentanyl mixed into things," said Medical Examiner Patrice Hall. "We're seeing xylazine, which is a large-animal tranquilizer. You literally don't know what you're getting."

Kenosha County had 53 toxicity deaths in 2021, 40 of which involved fentanyl or a fentanyl analog, Hall noted.

While Hall strongly advises against the use of illegal drugs and the misuse of prescription medications, she said those who do choose to use should obtain fentanyl test strips so they will know if it is included in the substances they've obtained.

The strips, which were previously considered drug paraphernalia, are now legal under a recent Wisconsin state law change, Hall said.

Test strips are available locally from Vivent Health-Kenosha, which can be reached at 262-657-6644 or online at <https://viventhealth.org/locations/kenosha/>.

Kenosha County Public Health has also placed an order for test strips and plans to soon begin distributing them as part of its Narcan training program, said Health Officer Dr. Jen Freiheit.

Narcan — a medication that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose — is another life-saving tool that Hall and Freiheit recommend and is readily available to all adults in Kenosha County at no charge.

More information about this program is available at <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/1916/Narcan-Distribution-Program>, by calling 262-605-6741, or by sending an email to [narcan@kenoshacounty.org](mailto:narcan@kenoshacounty.org).

Many other resources are also available to help people with a substance use disorder, Hall said.

More information about other drug prevention and recovery programs and resources is available at <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/1844/Drug-Prevention-Programs> and <https://www.saveliveskenosha.org>.

“Help is available in our community for anyone who is struggling with substance use,” Hall said. “No life is not worth saving, and there are many resources available in our community to help prevent these tragedies.”

Further information about prevention, treatment, and resources are listed below:

#### **KNOW WHAT A SUSPECTED OVERDOSE LOOKS LIKE:**

- Use the acronym **BLUE**:
  - **B (Breathing)**: The person is not breathing or breathing very slowly. They may be snoring or their breathing sounds like they are gurgling.
  - **L (Lips)**: Lips and fingertips are turning blue.
  - **U (Unresponsive)**: No response when you yell the person’s name or rub the middle of their chest hard.
  - **E (Eyes)**: Center part of their eye is very small, also called “pinpoint pupil.”
- **IF AN OVERDOSE IS SUSPECTED, GIVE NARCAN (if available) AND CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.** You or someone you know will require follow-up medical attention.

#### **TREATMENT/RESOURCES:**

- The Kenosha County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center, available at 262-764-8555 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, can help you find treatment and services that are right for you such as counseling, medication assisted treatment, or a 12-step program. Call the 24-hour Kenosha County Crisis Intervention Line 262-657-7188 for more immediate assistance.
- Professional Services Group provides the Comprehensive Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program at 262-654-1004.

- Resource packets that include information sheets and pamphlets about opioids and related community agencies and programs may be picked up in the lobby at the Public Safety Building, 1000 55<sup>th</sup> St., Kenosha.
- The “A Way Out” program at local police departments in Lake County, Ill., is available to anyone with private insurance, regardless of their residency. This program fast-tracks drug users to substance abuse programs and services. More information is available at [www.awayoutlc.org](http://www.awayoutlc.org).
- In addition to fentanyl test strips, Vivent Health also offers the Lifepoint Needle Exchange, HIV and sexually transmitted infection testing, Narcan, and other services. More details are at 262-657-6644 or <https://viventhealth.org/locations/kenosha/>.

#### **PREVENTION:**

- **LOCK UP YOUR MEDICATIONS:** Keep track of quantity by regularly counting your tablets, in order to make sure they are being used as prescribed, and not misused.
- **DISPOSE OF UNUSED OR EXPIRED MEDICATION:** Kenosha County has six medication drop boxes located at all the police departments. Visit <http://www.kenoshacounty.org/314/MedicationNeedle-Disposal> to find the nearest location and collection hours.
- **DO NOT SHARE** your medications. Use only as prescribed.
- When pain control is needed, ask your medical provider, dentist, or veterinarian if an alternative treatment or medication is available.
- **TALK WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY ABOUT THE DANGERS OF OPIOID/OPIATE USE.** For information visit: <https://www.saveliveskenosha.org/>.

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