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**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

To: Local Media

From: Katrina Harwood, Health Officer

Date: November 21, 2022

**Cocaine and Fentanyl: A Deadly Combination**

**Rock County, WI-** Rock County Public Health Department along with local partners would like to raise awareness about the rising impact of cocaine mixed with fentanyl as a cause of death in Rock County. Fentanyl is a growing problem as it has become the leading cause of drug-involved deaths in recent years.

“Right now, cocaine is the number one co-occurring controlled substance with fentanyl,” says Lieutenant Mike Blaser of the Janesville Police Department. This trend has been seen in local data examining drug-involved deaths. In 2021, 26% of drug-involved deaths involved both fentanyl and cocaine. In the first five months of 2022, 48% of drug-involved deaths involved both substances.

Sometimes fentanyl is intentionally put in cocaine or used simultaneously, but too many times, the fentanyl is not known to the user. This can lead to fentanyl poisoning and death. Fentanyl has also been found in pressed pills that look like other medications, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and heroin. Opioids are substances that people can build a tolerance to, so the amount that is okay for a person who uses opioids regularly can be fatal to a person who hasn't built up a tolerance. The amount of fentanyl needed for a fatal overdose is small and varies between and even within the same batch or pill.

It is recommended that anyone who purchases or uses any illicit drugs (including pills) assumes their drugs include an unknown amount of fentanyl and takes the appropriate precautions. Those precautions include: never using alone, keeping Narcan nearby, and testing drugs for fentanyl prior to use.

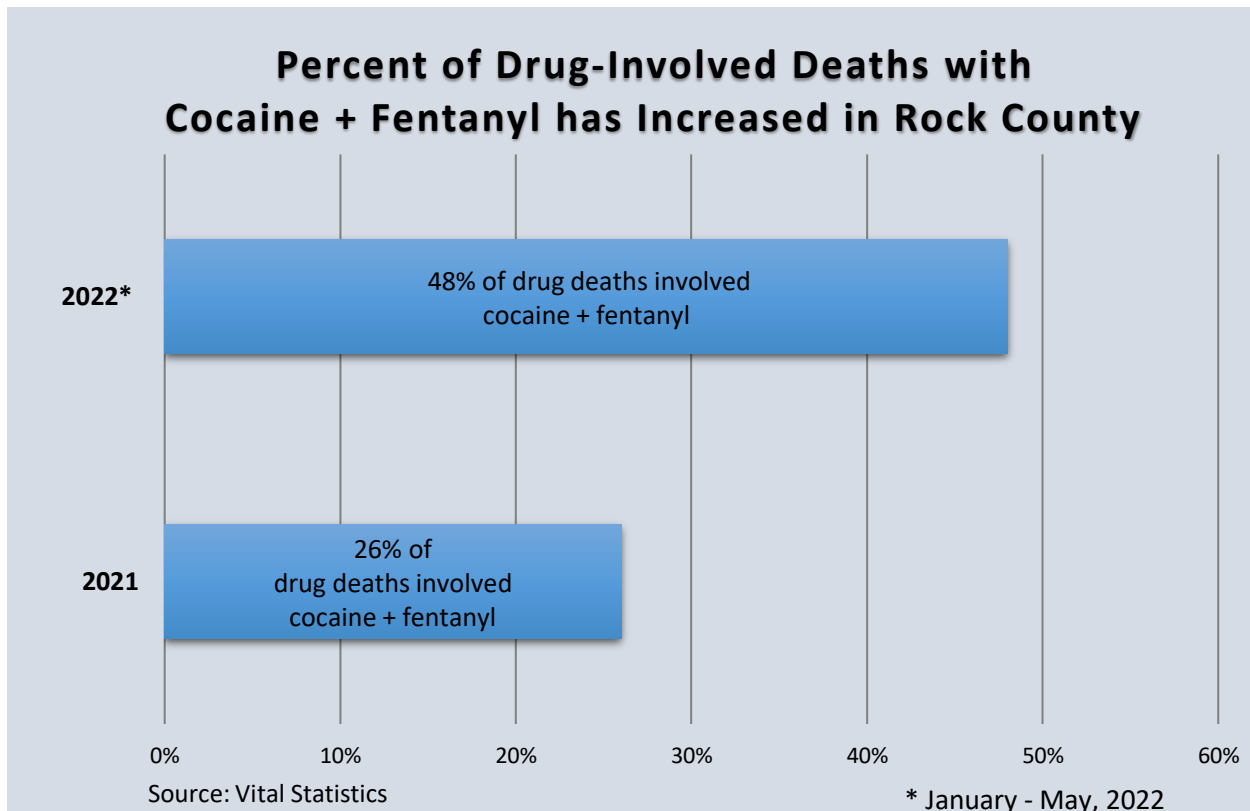
Narcan is a medication that reverses the effects of an opiate overdose. Anyone using illicit drugs or prescribed opiates should have Narcan on hand in case of an opiate overdose. Anyone can carry Narcan to save a life and can get it for free from Narcan Direct providers, or for a cost at most pharmacies. Wisconsin laws state that any person may possess a medication to reverse an opioid overdose, such as Narcan. They may also administer or give

it. Narcan has no effect on someone who does not have opioids in their system. Under the Wisconsin Good Samaritan Law, you cannot be held civilly liable for a good faith effort to provide assistance in a life-threatening situation. A list of Narcan Direct providers is available on the [Dose of Reality website](#).

Fentanyl test strips can reduce the risk of fentanyl overdose by alerting users to the presence of the drug. Instructions for how to use fentanyl test strips and a list of fentanyl test strip providers is available on the [Dose of Reality website](#).

The Rock County Public Department was awarded a grant from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to address opioid overdoses in Rock County. In the coming year, the following new initiatives will be implemented: an improved substance misuse data dashboard, an overdose spike alert system, awareness campaigns, anti-stigma trainings and post-overdose resource kits.

In 2021, Rock County saw the most drug-involved deaths in recorded history. If you or a loved one is misusing substances or struggling with addiction, we encourage you to seek treatment. Anyone not yet ready to seek treatment is encouraged to use harm reduction strategies like syringe exchange, fentanyl test strips, the [Never Use Alone hotline](#) and Narcan.



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*Rock County Public Health Department serves Rock County residents by improving population health outcomes and removing barriers through community partnerships to provide everyone the*

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*Helping Rock County reach its full health potential*

*opportunity to reach their full health potential. Visit the Rock County Public Health Department website at [www.co.rock.wi.us/departments/public-health](http://www.co.rock.wi.us/departments/public-health) and follow them on social media @rockcountyphd.*

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