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## Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

### PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

**To:** All Health Care Providers  
**From:** Nirav D. Shah, MD, JD, Director, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
**Subject:** Increase in Suspected Unintentional Overdoses in Cumberland County  
**Date / Time:** Saturday, February 1, 2020 at 2:45PM  
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**Abstract:**

On Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, the Northern New England Poison Control Center notified Maine CDC of ten individuals who potentially overdosed unintentionally over the weekend. All ten individuals received emergency assistance in Cumberland County. Cases were reported from multiple facilities.

Some of these individuals may have thought that they were using cocaine, but the cocaine may have been contaminated with opioids. At least one individual indicated they purchased the cocaine from a new dealer. Several individuals were seriously impaired and required naloxone to recover, some needing multiple doses. The intent of this HAN is to alert Emergency Medical Services, health care facilities and providers, and law enforcement to a potentially contaminated product that is leading to severe adverse outcomes.

## Increase in Suspected Unintentional Overdoses in Cumberland County

On Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, the Northern New England Poison Control Center notified Maine CDC of ten individuals who potentially overdosed unintentionally over the weekend. All 10 individuals received emergency assistance in Cumberland County. Cases were reported from multiple facilities. Some of these individuals may have thought that they were using cocaine, but the cocaine may have been contaminated with opioids. At least one individual indicated they purchased the cocaine from a new dealer. Several individuals were seriously impaired and required naloxone to recover, some needing multiple doses. No deaths are attributed to these overdoses at this time. The intent of this HAN is to alert Emergency Medical Services, health care facilities and providers, and law enforcement to a potentially contaminated product that is leading to severe adverse outcomes.

Maine is experiencing an opioid crisis in which illicit drugs have eclipsed the already existing problems with pharmaceutical opioids. Non-pharmaceutical fentanyl has become more widely available in Maine, peaking in 2017, causing the majority of drug overdose deaths, with parallel increases in law enforcement arrests and seizures, and treatment admissions.<sup>1</sup> Diversion and abuse of pharmaceutical narcotics increased at an alarming rate starting in 2002, but have plateaued since 2011.

Recognizing an opioid overdose can be difficult. Signs of an overdose may include:

- Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”
- Falling asleep or loss of consciousness
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Pale, blue, or cold skin

For more information:

- Substance use disorder help in Maine: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/gethelp/>
- Maine Opioid Helpline: dial 211, text your zip code to 898-211, or email [info@211maine.org](mailto:info@211maine.org)
- Maine Opioid data dashboard: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/syndromic>

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<sup>1</sup> Sorg, Marcella H. (2018) National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) Maine Sentinel Community Site Drug Use Patterns and Trends, 2018, SCS Highlights.

<https://ndews.umd.edu/sites/ndews.umd.edu/files/SCS-Report-2018-Maine-FINAL.pdf>