



**ATTENTION: PARTNERS IN GREENWOOD & UNION COUNTIES
AND SURROUNDING AREAS**

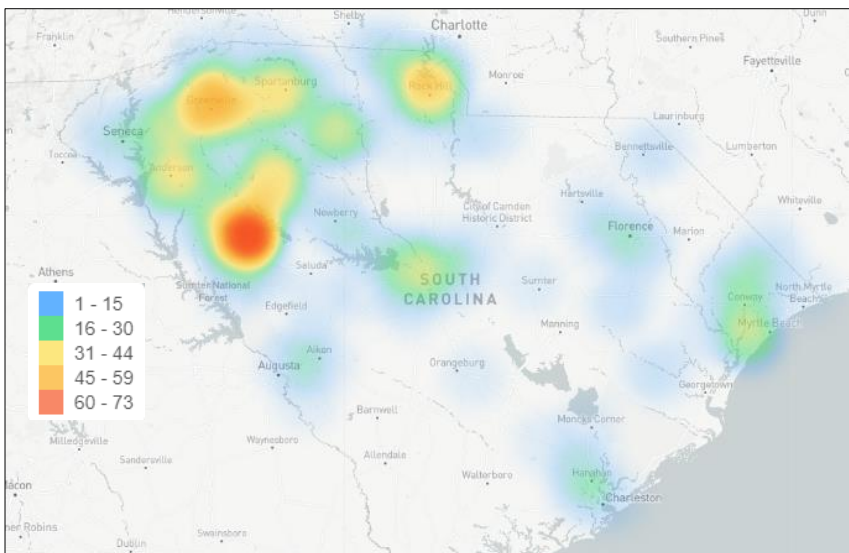
Advisory: Warning about potent counterfeit Roxicodone® (“blue pills”), dangers of using drugs purchased without prescriptions

The OERT is issuing an alert due to ongoing substance use and overdose activity in Greenwood and Union counties and surrounding areas connected with counterfeit 30 mg Roxicodone® (AKA “blue pills”) containing potent fentanyl. This alert is to increase community awareness and advise partners of the risks of using these counterfeit drugs and others purchased without prescriptions, as well as opportunities to prevent overdoses.

Overdoses Involving Pressed “Blue Pills” or 30 mg Roxicodone®

Since January 2020, more than 500 suspected opioid overdoses statewide have involved “blue pills,” which often look like 30 mg Roxicodone®. Of these incidents, 18% were reported in Greenwood County alone, and approximately two-thirds of all incidents were in Upstate counties. The highest per-capita rate of these incidents was in Greenwood, Union and Abbeville counties, and the highest counts were in Greenwood, Greenville and York counties.

A higher percentage of these overdoses involve individuals ages 20-29 than is typically seen for EMS overdose response. Individuals often report overdosing even after taking only half a pill. Many individuals were given the pills by family members or friends and did not know that they contained highly potent fentanyl.



*EMS suspected overdoses involving “blue pills”
(January 2020 – June 15, 2021)*

Peak overdose activity involving this substance was in summer 2020, and the Greenwood County Drug Enforcement Unit seized nearly 10,000 of these pressed blue pills in September 2020 ([Greenwood Index-Journal](#)). Law enforcement continues to dismantle pill presses ([Post and Courier](#)), but deadly pills like these have not gone away. **Greenwood County sustained a surge in suspected overdoses from May 30 through June 12, with half of the 22 incidents reported by first responders involving “blue pills.”** On June 2, local news covered the tragic death of an 18-month-old child who consumed “blue pills” – found on the father’s nightstand – that tested positive for fentanyl ([WYFF 4 News](#)).



Round “blue pills”
Picture: [drugabuse.com](#)

These overdoses can be prevented. The OERT endorses key overdose prevention/response strategies for partners in healthcare and public safety, particularly in the Upstate region but across the state, to address use of pressed pills containing highly potent fentanyl:

- 1. Communication to reinforce patient and public awareness of risks of taking pills that are not prescribed, even if offered by a family member or friend.** Communicate key messages with patient and public populations to take medications seriously and use them only as prescribed. Taking medications that are not obtained from a pharmacy requiring a valid prescription, purchased from a local source that is not a pharmacy, or even taken from a family member or friend can be dangerous because they may be pressed or fake, containing the wrong or other harmful ingredients. These pills can be particularly deadly when laced with fentanyl.
- 2. Continued overdose education and naloxone distribution for opioid-involved overdoses.** Naloxone is effective for reversing an overdose that involves opioids such as fentanyl, heroin, or oxycodone. Continue to encourage patients, family members, and caregivers of those at risk of overdose to have naloxone on hand. Share information about locations in the community where naloxone is available at no charge. Find locations near you at <http://justplainkillers.com/overdose-prevention/>
- 3. Offering fentanyl test strips as part of overdose education and naloxone distribution.** Fentanyl test strips can identify the presence of fentanyl in unregulated drugs. Identifying the presence of fentanyl enables an individual to make informed choices that can include implementing behavioral strategies to reduce the risk of overdose. Many community distributors of Narcan® in South Carolina also distribute fentanyl test strips. To find out where to access fentanyl test strips, contact a local community distributor in your area. Find locations near you at <http://justplainkillers.com/overdose-prevention/>
- 4. Promotion of resources for support with substance use and mental health challenges.** Share information in waiting areas, one-on-one interactions, and/or communications blasts with clients/patients, members of the public, and/or employees about the SC HOPES support line, established to provide residents with resources to deal with substance use or mental health issues related to COVID-19. The statewide support line can be reached 24/7, toll-free, at 1 (844) SC-HOPES (724-6737). Callers will be connected with trained clinicians who can address their specific needs. To order SC HOPES referral cards for shipment to your organization at no cost, go to <https://www.daodas.sc.gov/sc-hopes-card-orders/>

For more questions about this bulletin, contact Jimmy Mount at jmount@daodas.sc.gov.