

A Health care provider's guide to Carfentanil

What is Carfentanil?

Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid approximately one hundred times more potent than Fentanyl. It is used in veterinary medicine as a sedative or anesthetic agent for large animals. Opioids can come in many forms including powder, blotter paper, tablets, patch, and even sprays. Carfentanil can resemble powdered cocaine or heroin.

What do I do if I encounter an unidentified powder?

If staff encounter unidentified powders back out of the room, do not touch or disturb the powder. If any powder gets on clothing or intact skin, brush it off gently. Carfentanil in dry powder form does not absorb through intact skin.

What are the risks to health care providers? *Is personal protective equipment required? Can carfentanil be absorbed through the skin? Will I be affected if I breathe carfentanil in?*

According to Dr. Wes Palatnick, WRHA Toxicologist and Emergency Physician, there are no special precautions required to treat patients who are suspected to have ingested carfentanil. Carfentanil is not absorbed by intact skin. It can be absorbed via mucous membranes so **be sure to wear gloves and wash hands as per routine practices**. Carfentanil can also be absorbed via the respiratory tract, but only if it becomes aerosolized which is very uncommon.

Note: WRHA has confirmed with Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) that if a patient is being transported by WFPS they will be decontaminated (if necessary) prior to arrival in the ER.

What should I do if I believe there is Carfentanil in the client's environment?

The risk of exposure to fentanyl or carfentanil by a health care provider is extremely low. The health care provider's primary responsibility is to care for clients regardless of their health condition or personal choices and staff are expected to continue to provide care to patients **unless there is visible evidence of the drug within the care area**. If staff suspect the drug is present in the care area, they should follow safety protocol, leave the area, and contact their supervisor. The supervisor may deem it necessary to contact 911. If staff are unable to reach their supervisor or have concerns their client may be experiencing a medical emergency, they should call 911 immediately.

There are no known occupational exposures to healthcare workers.



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