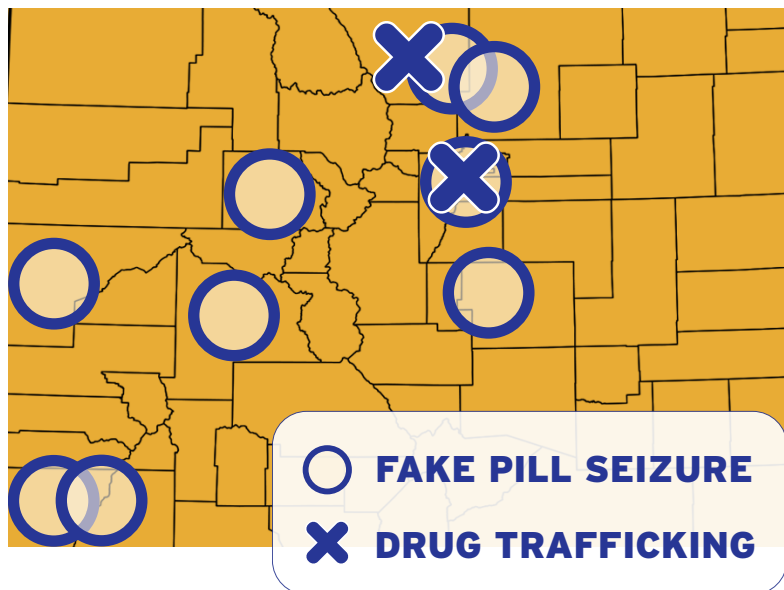


Fake Medicine is a Real Problem in Colorado

COUNTERFEIT PILLS CONTAINING FENTANYL ARE A PLAGUE THROUGHOUT THE STATE

The counterfeit fentanyl pill crisis in Colorado has exploded since the beginning of 2020. Law enforcement in **Colorado Springs, Denver, Fort Collins, Greeley, Gunnison, Mancos, and Eagle, Mesa, and Montezuma Counties** have all reported seizing pills. By disrupting drug trafficking rings that were distributing fentanyl pills in **Larimer and Denver Counties**, police prevented an unknown number of poisoning and deaths.



May 2021, Larimer County: Police dismantled a drug trafficking ring that distributed large quantities of fentanyl pills in the area.



April 2021, Eagle County: Police arrested a man with 3.5 pounds of suspected fentanyl pills.



April 2021, Grand Junction: A man was convicted of trafficking fake pills that caused bodily harm and death.



Counterfeit Medicine Continues to Be Found in Legitimate Places

The problem of counterfeit medicine is far greater than fake pills being sold on street corners. **Counterfeit medicine has been bought by medical professionals.** Over 3,000 doctors' offices and medical practices received warning letters from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 2012 and 2016 to stop purchasing medicine from known black market wholesalers. **Fifty-four of those letters were sent to doctors in Colorado.**

Coloradans need access to medications they can trust. Only a secure drug supply chain can give them that.

COUNTERFEIT & BLACK MARKET DRUG INCIDENTS IN COLORADO, 2011-2021

FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS MADE WITH FENTANYL

- May 2021:** The Northern Colorado Drug Task Force announced that “Operation Two Birds, One Stone,” dismantled a drug trafficking organization that was distributing large quantities of fentanyl pills and methamphetamine in Larimer County.¹
- April 2021:** Police in Eagle County arrested a man after a traffic stop revealed approximately three-and-one-half pounds of suspected fentanyl pills in his vehicle.²
- April 2021:** A federal jury convicted Bruce Holder of Grand Junction for his role in a drug trafficking organization that distributed counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl on the Western Slope. In December 2017, 30-year-old Jonathan Ellington of Carbondale died after ingesting one of these pills.³
- March 2021:** The chief medical examiner for the city and county of Denver reported that he was increasingly having to tell bereaved family members that loved ones who thought they were taking legitimate pharmaceutical pills had been killed by counterfeit pills made with fentanyl.⁴
- February 2021:** Boulder County Public Health warned that counterfeit Xanax and oxycodone containing fentanyl being sold in the area could be tied to a recent string of poisoning and deaths.⁵
- December 2020:** Police arrested a man in Gunnison found with multiple illicit drugs, including what police suspected was a large number of counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl.⁶
- December 2020:** Police in Montezuma County seized 83 grams of fentanyl pills while they were investigating a man from New Mexico who sold fentanyl to an undercover officer.⁷
- December 2020:** An Arapahoe County grand jury indicted a man for causing the August death of a 16-year-old girl, who died from fentanyl poisoning. The man allegedly gave the teenager what she thought was an oxycodone, but the pill was a fake made with fentanyl.⁸
- October 2020:** A nine-month investigation led to federal charges against thirteen individuals for their roles in a drug trafficking organization that distributed counterfeit OxyContin pills containing fentanyl in multiple states, including Colorado.⁹
- September 2020:** Police in the Greeley area busted a drug trafficking organization, searching five properties and seizing 5,000 fentanyl pills along with other illicit drugs.¹⁰
- September 2020:** After two people nearly died from fentanyl poisoning, police in Cañon City issued a warning about counterfeit Percocet pills being sold in the area.¹¹
- August 2020:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents in Louisville, Kentucky seized 337 grams of fentanyl pills concealed inside an automobile part shipped from Mexico to an address in Colorado.¹²
- July 2020:** Deputies with the Mancos Marshal’s office discovered 125 fentanyl pills while performing a routine traffic stop.¹³
- June 2020:** While searching multiple properties in and around Fort Collins, police investigating a drug trafficking ring seized fentanyl pills and a variety of illicit narcotics.¹⁴
- April 2020:** While serving multiple search warrants, police in Colorado Springs seized over \$760,000 worth of drugs, including one-and-one-half-pounds of suspected fentanyl pills.¹⁵
- March 2020:** The Gunnison Police Department began to investigate the sale of counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl.¹⁶
- February 2020:** Federal authorities announced charges against 30 individuals for their roles in two different drug trafficking rings based out of Denver with suspected ties to a Mexican cartel. Federal agents seized 15,000 counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl over the course of the investigation.¹⁷
- January 2020:** After counterfeit OxyContin pills containing fentanyl poisoned eight people, two of whom died, police arrested two people in Fort Collins connected to the sale of those fake pills.¹⁸
- January 2020:** A Colorado State Trooper searched a vehicle during a traffic stop in Mesa County and found 144 grams of fentanyl pills and 23 pounds of suspected methamphetamine.¹⁹

- January 2020:** A federal grand jury indicted five individuals, three of whom lived in Colorado, for their roles in a prolific online drug trafficking organization. Starting in 2013, the defendants allegedly manufactured and sold over one million counterfeit pills containing fentanyl on several darknet marketplaces.²⁰
- December 2019:** Law enforcement in El Paso County seized over 3,700 fentanyl pills and 35 grams of fentanyl in powder form in 2019.²¹ Just a few days earlier, the Colorado Springs Police Department issued a warning about counterfeit pills, such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, Percocet, and Xanax, being sold on the city's streets.²²
- December 2019:** A federal judge sentenced a man found in possession of 12,000 fentanyl pills to six years in prison.²³
- September 2019:** The Northern Colorado Drug Task Force arrested ten individuals and seized a variety of drugs, including counterfeit fentanyl pills.²⁴
- July 2019:** Law enforcement arrested 14 people with ties to a Colorado Springs drug ring and seized 3,100 fentanyl pills among 19 pounds of other drugs.²⁵
- July 2019:** Police in Longmont arrested twenty members of a drug trafficking ring and seized nearly 1,500 counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl.²⁶ Boulder County District Attorney's office indicted an additional individual in October.²⁷ The two leaders of the drug ring, Michael Reed and Michael Ward, have since pleaded guilty and received 28-year sentences.²⁸
- January 2019:** Authorities announced federal indictments against five individuals for their roles in the counterfeit pill death of Grand Junction resident Ashley Romero, who died on June 11, 2018.²⁹
- January 2019:** Police in Grand Junction seized 251 grams of suspected counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl during a traffic stop.³⁰
- August 2018:** A police raid on an apartment in Grand Junction led to the seizure of a pill press and hundreds of counterfeit pills, including some made to look like Xanax and others that contained fentanyl.³¹
- July 2018:** A 27-year-old Grand Junction man pleaded not guilty to distributing the counterfeit oxycodone pill containing fentanyl that killed 30-year-old Jonathan Ellington on December 28, 2017 in Carbondale.³²
- June 2018:** 22-year-old Benjamin Schwartz pleaded guilty to selling several Xanax pills, one of which was a counterfeit laced with fentanyl, to Boulder resident Madeline Globe. Globe ingested the fake pill and died on August 10, 2017.³³
- October 2017:** U.S. Department of Justice announced indictments against two Chinese nationals for distributing fentanyl across the U.S., including to addresses in Colorado.³⁴
- August 2017:** Charges were announced against Lakewood resident Carlos Ramirez. DEA agents discovered him in possession of 40 pounds of fentanyl at a hotel in The Bronx, NY. Police said this much fentanyl could cause 7 million overdoses.³⁵
- November 2016:** A Utah-based drug counterfeiting operation shipped two buyers in Colorado a total of 30 fentanyl-laced counterfeit oxycodone pills.³⁶

BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- April 2015:** The FDA warned three Colorado medical practices and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA-approved medications.³⁷
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, 12 in Colorado, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA-approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.³⁸
- 2012-2013:** One Colorado doctor was among more than 500 U.S. medical practices across the country warned to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.³⁹

MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT BOTOX

- August 2020:** CBP agents in Cincinnati announced the seizure of multiple shipments of prohibited dermal fillers and counterfeit Botox. The shipments were headed to private addresses in Colorado, California, Florida, Maryland, Texas, and Virginia.⁴⁰
- March 2016:** The FDA warned 34 Colorado doctors and more than 1,200 nationwide to stop buying from Canadian distributor TC Medical, which sold 22 different kinds of non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Botox.⁴¹
- July 2013:** The FDA warned two medical practices in Colorado to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.⁴²

November 2012: Two Colorado doctors were among over 350 U.S. medical practices that received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit versions of Botox from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.⁴³

OTHER DRUGS

January 2011: Chinese national Shengyang Zhou pleaded guilty in federal court in Denver to selling counterfeit versions of the weight loss drug Alli that were adulterated with sibutramine. One person who took the fake drugs suffered a stroke.⁴⁴

Footnotes

1. "Major Drug Trafficking Organization Dismantled," Larimer County, May 26, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3g9CPBT>.
2. Audra Streetman, "Jonathan Perez Arrested in Eagle County After Traffic Stop Yields Suspected Fentanyl Pills," *CBS4 Denver*, April 30, 2021, <https://cbsloc.al/353ZkS6>.
3. "Grand Junction Man Convicted of Conspiring to Distribute Fentanyl Resulting in Death," U.S. Department of Justice, April 19, 2021, <https://bit.ly/2Ta0MzY>.
4. Anusha Roy, "The Reason for the Recent Strain on Denver's Coroner's Office (It's Not COVID)," *9NEWS*, March 3, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3g48qVx>.
5. Makayla Richards and Marc Sallinger, "Street Drugs Containing Fentanyl Circulating in Boulder, Officials Say," *9NEWS*, February 6, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3x4yuoY>.
6. "Gunnison Man Arrested for Drug Distribution," *Gunnison County Times*, January 7, 2021, cached at <https://bit.ly/2UY9xxQ>.
7. Jim Mimiaga, "Montezuma-Cortez Narcotics Team Makes Another Heroin Arrest," *The Journal*, February 26, 2021, <https://bit.ly/2TlyoVA>.
8. Shelly Bradbury, "Aurora Man Indicted for First-degree Murder in 16-year-old's Overdose Death," *Denver Post*, December 1, 2020, <https://dpo.st/3ybqf1g>.
9. "Thirteen Charged in Fresno Interstate Multi-Drug Ring," U.S. Department of Justice, October 1, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3pCvMoc>.
10. Trevor Reid, "Thousands of Fentanyl Pills, 100 Pounds of Meth and \$250,000 Seized After International Drug Trafficking Ring Busted in Greeley Area," *Greeley Tribune*, September 9, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3v8cGB9>.
11. Andrew McMillan, "Cañon City Police Warns of Pills Cut with Fentanyl After Near-fatal Overdoses," *KRDO*, September 4, 2020, <https://bit.ly/352j1bi>.
12. "168,000 Lethal Doses of Fentanyl Intercepted by CBP Officers in Louisville," U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 6, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3pFa1Es>.
13. Emily Hayes, "Fentanyl Drug Use Spiking in Montezuma County," *The Journal*, August 11, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3iAOqLT>.
14. Melissa Reeves, "Northern Colorado Drug Task Force Dismantles Drug Trafficking Organization," *9NEWS*, June 17, 2020, <https://bit.ly/35qqUJy>.
15. "Colorado Springs Police Investigation Leads to Drug Bust Worth More Than \$760,000," *KOAA NEWS5*, April 27, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3pZ5T1W>.
16. "Lethal Drug Being Sold in Gunnison," *Newsbreak*, March 12, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3vxTinu>.
17. Ryan Osborne, "30 with Suspected Ties to Mexican Drug Cartel Indicted in Denver, Feds Say," *The Denver Channel*, February 19, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2S6BaDH>.
18. Carina Julig, "Two Houses Raided in Fort Collins in Connection with Fentanyl Overdoses," *Longmont Reporter-Herald*, January 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3xwo69V>.
19. Alex Zorn, "21 Pounds of Meth Found During Traffic Stop Thursday," *The Daily Sentinel*, January 24, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3iLTXPg>.
20. "5 Charged in \$2.8 Million Dark Web Drug Trafficking, Money Laundering Conspiracy," U.S. Department of Justice, January 15, 2020, <http://bit.ly/2tTifjM>.
21. Olivia Prentzel, "Rise of Fentanyl Overdose Deaths in El Paso County Is Evidence of Deadly Drug's Westward March," *The Gazette*, December 12, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3iPIrTi>.
22. Tyler Dumas, "CSPD Warns of Dangerous Drug Being Distributed in El Paso County," *KOAA NEWS5*, December 9, 2019, <http://bit.ly/39ZF9ej>.
23. "Mexican National Living in Colorado Sentenced to Federal Prison for Possession with Intent to Distribute Fentanyl," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, December 2, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3q6Xhqf>.
24. "UPDATE - Methamphetamine, Heroin, and Fentanyl Drug Trafficking Organization Dismantled," *Larimer County*, September 13, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2p9qAgQ>.
25. Emily Wenger, "14 People Arrested for Allegedly Distributing Illegal Drugs in Colorado Springs," *FOX31 Denver KDVR-TV*, July 29, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2O1nbsC>.
26. "20 Arrested in Massive Northern Colorado Drug Bust," *9NEWS*, July 2, 2019, <http://bit.ly/36Rts2V>.
27. Kelsey Hammond, "Additional Defendant in Longmont's Operation Misfire Drug Bust is Named," *Longmont Times-Call*, October 17, 2019, <http://bit.ly/32wcSSD>.
28. Mitchell Byars, "Second Key Suspect in Longmont's Operation Misfire Sentenced to 28 Years in Prison," *Longmont Times-Call*, April 9, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cultMB> and Mitchell Byars, "Key Suspect in Longmont's Operation Misfire Case Gets 28 Years in Prison," *Longmont Times-Call*, August 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3w7v5FM>.
29. Amy Hamilton, "Death by Overdose Results in Charges," *The Daily Sentinel*, January 26, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2Q37xzO>.
30. Amy Hamilton, "Suspected Fentanyl Found in Traffic Stop," *The Daily Sentinel*, January 14, 2019, <http://bit.ly/33A6POt>.
31. Gabrielle Porter, "Fentanyl, Xanax Found at Drug Bust Scene," *The Daily Sentinel*, August 21, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2qB5wQP>.
32. Gabrielle Porter, "Junction Man Indicted in Fatal Overdose of Fentanyl," *The Daily Sentinel*, July 31, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2NCwf8J>.
33. Derek Maiolo, "Of Flowers and Fentanyl: a Steamboat Couple's Journey to Find Answers to Their Daughter's Death," *The Aspen Times*, October 7, 2019, <http://bit.ly/34Owl3M>.
34. "Justice Department Announces First Ever Indictments Against Designated Chinese Manufacturers of Deadly Fentanyl and Other Opiate Substances," U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, October 17, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DLidOx>.
35. "Lakewood Man Indicted for Having 40 Pounds of Fentanyl in New York," *FOX31 Denver KDVR-TV*, August 1, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2BAZXLc>.
36. Superseding Indictment, U.S. District Court, District of Utah, Central Division, Case No. 2:16-cr-00631-DAK, <http://bit.ly/2mGXekE>.
37. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated July 3, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
38. Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs, 2012-2014," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated July 2, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
39. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
40. "CBP Cincinnati Seizes Illegal, Dangerous Injectable Cosmetics," U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 27, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3ivQMEE>.
41. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased...", <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
42. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
43. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
44. "Chinese National Pleads Guilty to Trafficking Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Weight-loss Drug," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, January 28, 2011, <http://bit.ly/2NAiVld> and Criminal Complaint, U.S. District Court, State and District of Colorado, Case No. 1:10-cr-00226-PAB, <http://bit.ly/3BpJP5X>.