

Massachusetts is awash in counterfeit drugs

- FAKE PILL SEIZURE
- PILL PRESS SEIZURE
- ✕ DEATH FROM FAKE PILLS



Massachusetts was one of the earliest states to report fake pills made with fentanyl, but now, counterfeits made with fentanyl have become commonplace.

In 2020, there were major seizures of fake pills made with fentanyl in **Danvers, Lawrence, Peabody, Franklin, and North Shore**, with each seizure numbering in the thousands. The pills come disguised as Percocet, oxycodone, and Xanax. Pill presses were seized in **Quincy, Natick, and the North Shore**, indicating many of these deadly fakes are being made locally. Since 2019, press reports have identified fatalities caused by the fake pills in **Natick, Brockton, and Plymouth County**. We will never know how many counterfeit pills deaths have not been reported.



January 2021: Quincy police find a self-contained mobile pill-making lab inside a trailer at a storage facility.



September 2020: Boston CBP seize 1,000 illegally imported Tramadol pills.



January 2020: 15 pounds of fake Percocet made with fentanyl seized in North Shore.



Counterfeit drugs have also been found in Massachusetts's medical practices.

Between 2012 and 2016, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration sent warnings to 37 of the state's doctors' offices, telling them to stop purchasing from unlicensed medication distributors that were suspected of selling counterfeit Botox. The FDA also warned 22 doctors' offices to stop buying cancer medicines from illegitimate drug distributors that were implicated in sales of counterfeit Avastin to U.S. medical practices. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their loved ones were given real medication or whether they died from a lack of treatment.

Patients in Massachusetts should not have to worry about whether their medicine is safe, genuine or effective. Protect them by supporting and strengthening the closed U.S. drug supply chain.

COUNTERFEIT & BLACK MARKET DRUG INCIDENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS, 2010-2021



BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS MADE WITH FENTANYL

- January 2021:** Brockton Police seized 112 grams of pills made with fentanyl during a vehicle search. A Whitman man was arrested at the scene.¹
- January 2021:** Police in Quincy found a pill press, pill molds and a quantity of fentanyl powder and its precursors in a trailer at a storage facility.²
- November 2020:** A Providence man was arrested in Milford after selling counterfeit pills made with fentanyl to an undercover officer.³
- October 2020:** Danvers Police seized 2,500 counterfeit pills made with fentanyl, along with weapons and other drugs. Three men were arrested.⁴
- September 2020:** A Lawrence man was arrested after selling 1,000 fake oxycodone made with fentanyl to undercover officers. At his arrest, law enforcement seized another 5,000 fake pills.⁵
- July 2020:** A Peabody couple was charged with fentanyl trafficking after police found 1,400 fake pills containing fentanyl and Adderall in their home.⁶
- June 2020:** Fire department medics revived a Falmouth man who had taken pills they suspected were counterfeits made with fentanyl.⁷
- May 2020:** Franklin Police finished a lengthy investigation by arresting two men and seizing \$15,000 worth of fake pills made with fentanyl in their home.⁸
- April 2020:** A Brockton man was charged with manslaughter after one of the fake oxycodone pills he smuggled into a hospital killed another patient. A correctional officer seized 24 blue pills made with fentanyl from him at his arrest.⁹
- January 2020:** A pair of North Shore residents faced fentanyl trafficking charges after investigators seized a pill press and 15 pounds of fake Percocet during a raid.¹⁰
- January 2020:** A federal grand jury indicted three Dominican nationals living in Lawrence after they sold undercover agents 500 suspected fentanyl pills, and 55 grams of fentanyl powder.¹¹
- December 2019:** Federal authorities charged a Natick man after a missing Suffolk University student was found dead from fentanyl poisoning in his home. A pill press, fake Xanax, powdered fentanyl and powdered methamphetamine were also found.¹²
- December 2019:** Plymouth County Outreach issued warning after seven deaths they suspected were caused by counterfeit Xanax made with fentanyl.¹³
- August 2018:** DEA agents arrested a California man in North Andover in possession of what law enforcement believed was four kilograms of heroin, five kilograms of fentanyl, and 5,000 pills. A search of the vehicle turned up another two kilograms of narcotics and approximately 5,000 additional pills.¹⁴
- August 2018:** A Chinese national living in Massachusetts pleaded guilty for his role in a global opioid and fentanyl distribution ring that illegally shipped narcotics and counterfeit prescription drugs to his warehouse in Woburn so that packages could be forwarded to customers throughout the United States.¹⁵ The two alleged leaders of the drug ring, who claimed they could manufacture counterfeit cancer medicines, were indicted later in the month.¹⁶
- May 2018:** Raids at apartments in Lynn, Peabody, and Saugus turned up multiple stashes of drugs, including two and one-half kilograms of heroin and fentanyl and 1,900 oxycodone pills.¹⁷
- April 2018:** Law enforcement brought down a major drug ring run by two brothers who lived in Lawrence. Police arrested 45 people tied to the ring and seized 60 pounds of fentanyl.¹⁸
- March 2018:** U.S. Department of Justice announced the indictment of two Worcester men found in possession of multiple illicit drugs and dozens of fentanyl pills.¹⁹
- February 2018:** A six-month-long investigation dubbed "Operation High Hopes" brought down a major drug trafficking ring. Law enforcement seized multiple illicit drugs, including more than 33 pounds of fentanyl, and arrested 37 individuals.²⁰

- August 2017:** Federal agents busted a drug ring that was allegedly responsible for distributing “kilogram quantities” of fentanyl and heroin in the Cape Cod area. Agents also seized hundreds of counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl.²¹
- March 2017:** U.S. postal inspectors seized an Ohio-bound package mailed from Falmouth that contained 1,500 fentanyl pills made to resemble oxycodone.²²
- September 2016:** Salem Police warned residents that they had found counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl in the area.²³

BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- April 2015:** The FDA sent warning letters to 12 Massachusetts doctors and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.²⁴
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including 10 doctors’ offices in Massachusetts, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.²⁵

COUNTERFEIT AND MISBRANDED MEDICATION

- September 2020:** The Boston branch of U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Anti-Terrorism Contraband Enforcement Team (A-TCET) seized 1,000 illegally imported Tramadol pills.²⁶
- August 2020:** A Massachusetts doctor and his wife were charged for illegally importing medicines for treating alcoholism and opioid dependence. They bought the non-FDA approved drugs in China.²⁷
- March 2018:** A man received a 10-year prison sentence and three years probation for manufacturing and distributing counterfeit steroids bearing the name of Onyx Pharmaceuticals, a legitimate company that does not manufacture liquid steroids. A fellow conspirator received a year-long sentence.²⁸
- February 2018:** A Palmer man received a two-year prison sentence for importing misbranded prescription drugs from Pakistan and distributing them to customers around the United States. This case involved an assortment of drugs - including Ritalin, Percocet, hydrocodone, Adderall, and Restoril.²⁹

COUNTERFEIT COSMETIC INJECTABLES

- March 2016:** 21 doctors’ offices and practices in Massachusetts were among more than 1,227 doctors nationwide who received warning letters from the FDA to stop buying infusion drugs from TC Medical Group, which sold more than \$33 million worth of non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Botox.³⁰
- July 2013:** The FDA warned eight doctors and medical practices in Massachusetts to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.³¹
- November 2012:** Eight Massachusetts doctors were among the 350 nationwide that received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit versions of Botox from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.³²

FOOTNOTES

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