

Mississippi Has a Serious Problem with Counterfeit Drugs

THE FENTANYL PILL PROBLEM IN MISSISSIPPI IS EXPLODING

Mississippi counterfeit drug incidents are not often reported beyond the local level. However, in the last two years, **fake drugs warnings have been issued all over the state**. In April 2021, the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) issued a warning about toxic counterfeit pills after **ten Pine Belt residents died due to fentanyl poisoning**. In March 2021, Madison County Sheriffs' Office issued a warning about fentanyl poisonings due to fake pills in their county. In September 2020, federal and state law enforcement in **Northern Mississippi** issued a warning about counterfeit pills after several fentanyl poisoning deaths in their area.



March 2022: A Jackson resident who sold a deadly fentanyl pill in 2021 was sentenced to 100 years in prison.



November 2021: Ten residents of Oxford died after taking counterfeit oxycodone made with fentanyl.



July 2021: Approximately 3,000 fentanyl pills were seized during a traffic stop in Perry County.



Residents of the Magnolia State deserve effective medicine that they can trust. A secure U.S. drug supply chain is the best way to keep them safe.



Counterfeit medicines and treatments have also turned up in Mississippi medical offices and clinics



In May 2021, Starkville physician Benjamin Franklin Sanford, Jr. received probation, was fined, and ordered to forfeit almost \$600,000 after admitting to treating patients with imported and misbranded osteoporosis infusions. Between 2012 and 2015, the FDA warned 17 different medical practices in Mississippi to stop buying prescription treatments from unlicensed medical suppliers that sold counterfeit cancer medicines or fake Botox.



COUNTERFEIT AND BLACK MARKET DRUG INVESTIGATIONS IN MISSISSIPPI, 2010-2022

FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS CONTAINING FENTANYL

- February 2022:** Jackson resident Carlos Dominique Allen convicted of the sale of fentanyl. It was alleged that he provided the fentanyl pill that killed Austin Elliott in 2021.¹ Allen was sentenced to 100 years in prison on March 28, 2022.²
- November 2021:** Twenty-six residents of Oxford, including some college students were poisoned by counterfeit oxycodone containing fentanyl. Of the twenty-six, ten died and the rest were revived with naloxone.³
- November 2021:** Authorities in Tupelo arrested a man and seized hundreds of fentanyl pills during a traffic stop.⁴
- July 2021:** Deputies with the Perry County Sheriff's Office seized approximately 3,000 fentanyl pills and a small amount of methamphetamine during a Saturday morning traffic stop.⁵
- May 2021:** Canton resident Justin R. Williams received an 11-year prison sentence for his role in distributing fentanyl pills. Police seized 380 fake pills made with fentanyl at his arrest.⁶
- April 2021:** The MBN issued a public warning about counterfeit pills containing fentanyl for the Pine Belt region after ten people died. Law enforcement suspected fake pills were the cause of at least eight of these deaths. A pill press that may have been used to make these pills was seized in Jackson.⁷
- March 2021:** Madison County Sheriff Tommy Jones warned that frequent seizures of fentanyl pills were one driving factor of the fentanyl poisoning deaths in the area.⁸
- October 2020:** Pass Christian resident Carter Tranh Tran sentenced to 50 months in prison for selling counterfeit Adderall containing fentanyl, amongst other drugs.⁹
- September 2020:** A joint warning about deadly counterfeit pills made with fentanyl was issued by federal, state, and local authorities after a series of fentanyl-related deaths in north Mississippi.¹⁰
- September 2020:** Sam Brown, Jr. died after he ingested a counterfeit Percocet containing fentanyl sold to him by a dealer on Snapchat.¹¹
- August 2020:** Damarcus Mackie was one of five people sentenced in Virginia for participating in a multi-state fentanyl pill manufacturing and distribution conspiracy. According to court documents, Mackie acquired heroin and fentanyl, which he sold in quantities as low as grams, as well as making counterfeit pills out of the two substances.¹²
- June 2019:** Police in Booneville announced that three residents had been hospitalized and two had died after taking fentanyl in pill or powder form. A family member of one of the deceased told a reporter that his mother had taken a counterfeit Percocet.¹³
- April 2019:** Dale Ricardo Easterling of Moss Point received a more than ten-year sentence for drug trafficking. State troopers found 99 counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl and 833 grams of powdered fentanyl among various illicit drugs in his home in July 2018.¹⁴
- March 2019:** The MBN reported six cases of fentanyl poisoning—one fatal—in the Hattiesburg area and warned that authorities had found fentanyl-laced counterfeit oxycodone in the Pine Belt for the first time.¹⁵
- December 2018:** A Ridgeland man died after the MBN and the Ridgeland Police Department found him unconscious in his home. Investigation showed that he had taken counterfeit oxycodone made with carfentanil.¹⁶
- May 2018:** Gulfport Police warned the public about counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl being sold in the area.¹⁷
- November 2017:** A man in Madison County died after taking counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl.¹⁸
- October 2017:** Police in Gulfport discovered 7,041 grams of fentanyl in a truck during a traffic stop.¹⁹
- September 2017:** A Mississippi grand jury indicted a Chinese national for allegedly manufacturing and distributing a variety of illegal drugs, including fentanyl.²⁰

BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including five doctors' offices in Mississippi, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.²¹
- February–June 2012:** One Mississippi doctor was among the 136 nationwide who received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit Avastin or Altzuan from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.²²

MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT BOTOX

- March 2016:** The FDA warned nine Mississippi 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.²³
- July 2013:** The FDA warned one doctor/medical practice in Mississippi to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.²⁴
- November 2012:** One Mississippi doctor was among the 350 nationwide who received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit versions of Botox from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.²⁵

OTHER COUNTERFEIT DRUGS

- May 2021:** Starkville physician Benjamin Franklin Sanford, Jr. was sentenced to three years of probation and ordered to pay over \$577,000 in fines, fees, and forfeiture for treating patients with misbranded and foreign-made versions of Prolia, Boniva and Aclasta, which are all treatments for osteoporosis.²⁶
- January 2019:** A Jackson resident was charged with selling counterfeit Xanax made with clonazepam that killed a Madison resident in November 2018 and counterfeit, carfentanil-laced oxycodone that had killed a Ridgeland resident the following month.²⁷
- November 2016:** A Utah-based drug counterfeiting operation shipped 100 counterfeit alprazolam pills to a customer in Mississippi.²⁸
- September 2014:** A Mississippi woman received a life sentence after she convinced an Atlanta-area resident to come to Jackson for illegal silicone injections. The victim died eight days after receiving the injections.²⁹
- November 2010:** Over a ten-month period, undercover agents purchased counterfeit drugs, including fake painkillers, antibiotics, and birth control, from convenience stores across the state.³⁰

Footnotes

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