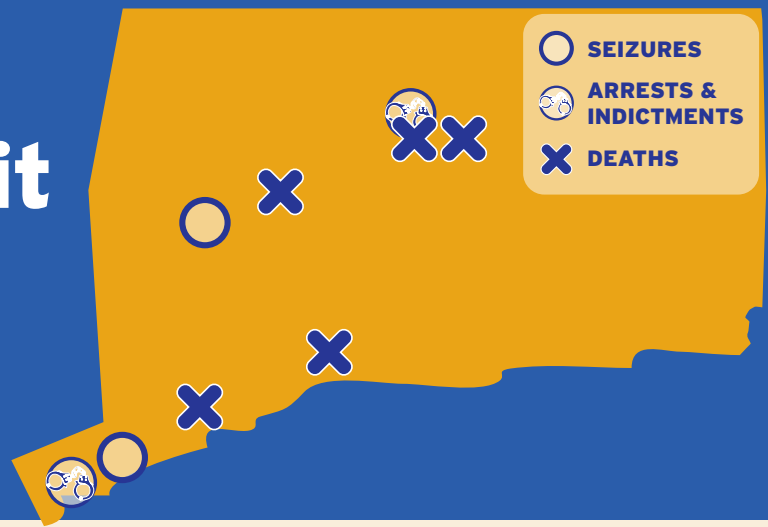



Connecticut: Deadly Counterfeit Pills Are Everywhere



COUNTERFEIT PILLS HAVE BEEN STRONGLY PRESENT IN CONNECTICUT IN RECENT YEARS.



2020 saw the arrests of three Hartford men who were allegedly involved in a fentanyl and fentanyl pill ring and **the fentanyl poisoning death of 25-year-old Jake Beddoe**, who took a fraction of a fake Xanax pill. In 2019, law enforcement made **pill seizures in Waterbury and Norwalk** and **eight Hartford residents were killed by counterfeit pills that contained fentanyl** in May and June. In August 2018, two Stamford men were indicted for **importing fentanyl analogues and pressing them into pills they sold online**. The media also reported fentanyl pill deaths Plymouth, Manchester, and Hamden.



May 2020: A 25-year-old in Trumbull died of fentanyl poisoning after taking one-quarter of a counterfeit Xanax pill.



June 2019: Six Hartford residents between the ages of 51 and 60 died in a 36-hour period after taking pills made with fentanyl and other drugs.



December 2017: A Norwich resident pleaded guilty to making and selling 213,000 counterfeit Xanax tablets and thousands of units of anabolic steroids.

The people of Connecticut should not have to worry if a prescribed medication is genuine and safe. A closed, secure supply chain for medicines is the best way to protect them.

CONNECTICUT ALSO HAS ITS SHARE OF OTHER COUNTERFEIT DRUGS.

A January 2021 raid on two **mini-markets** in Waterbury found hundreds of unidentified pills. **Pill press operations** making a variety of counterfeit pills were busted in Norwich, Shelton, West Hartford, and Westport between 2013 and 2019, and three different illegal steroid suppliers were shut down between 2011 and 2017.



Counterfeit medication has also made its way into doctor's offices and other medical settings.

Between 2012 and 2016, the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned 25 Connecticut medical practices** to stop purchasing medications from known black-market wholesalers. These warning letters covered a range of medications, including **drugs to treat cancer and migraines**.

COUNTERFEIT AND BLACK MARKET DRUG INVESTIGATIONS IN CONNECTICUT, 2011-2021



BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS CONTAINING FENTANYL

- December 2020:** Torrie Smith of Hartford received a five-year prison sentence for drug distribution. Law enforcement seized 224 OxyContin pills, 12 grams of fentanyl powder and other illicit drugs over the course of their investigation into Smith.¹
- December 2020:** Law enforcement in Rutland, Vermont arrested three Hartford men and seized 52 suspected oxycodone pills, 69 bags of suspected fentanyl and other drugs during an illicit drug distribution investigation.²
- November 2020:** Darry Jose Guerrero of Waterbury received an 87-month prison sentence for his role in a fentanyl and heroin distribution ring. Investigators seized 1,000 fake Percocet made with fentanyl, 100,000 bags of fentanyl-heroin mixture, and six kilos of fentanyl/heroin mixture.³
- May 2020:** Jake Beddoe, a 25-year-old from Trumbull, died of fentanyl poisoning after taking one quarter of what he thought was Xanax.⁴
- March 2020:** New Haven resident Musa Hill sentenced to six years in prison for distributing counterfeit oxycodone containing fentanyl and other drugs.⁵
- February 2020:** A Greenwich man was accused of supplying the counterfeit Percocet containing fentanyl that caused the near-fatal poisoning of a Norwalk man.⁶
- November 2019:** Two Waterbury residents pleaded guilty to charges related to supplying a Plymouth man with counterfeit oxycodone pills that killed him in April 2017.⁷
- October 2019:** The DEA's New Haven Task Force and the Waterbury Police Department seized 1,000 fentanyl pills disguised as Percocet and a large volume of suspected heroin/fentanyl while breaking up a fentanyl trafficking ring.⁸
- June 2019:** Six people between the ages of 51 and 60 died in Hartford a 36-hour period after taking pills that contained fentanyl, heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine.⁹ Hartford Police reported two similar deaths in May 2019.¹⁰
- June 2019:** Norwalk resident Domenico Sandalo was arrested in possession of 600 grams of cocaine along with 77 oxycodone pills, 46 fentanyl pills, and a variety of other drugs. Sandalo pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute cocaine in December 2020.¹¹
- August 2018:** Federal authorities indicted three men for importing fentanyl analogues from China, pressing them into counterfeit oxycodone pills in a residence in Stamford, and selling them online. Two defendants pleaded not guilty after being extradited from Albania in April 2019.¹² The third defendant, David Reichard, pleaded guilty in May 2019 for his role in the conspiracy.¹³
- February 2018:** 29-year-old man from Manchester died after taking a counterfeit oxycodone pill made with fentanyl.¹⁴
- January 2018:** An Essex man pleaded guilty to charges related to distributing fentanyl and other drugs. Investigation showed that he had purchased 500 oxycodone made with fentanyl in April 2017.¹⁵
- June 2017:** Federal law enforcement confiscated 20 kilograms of heroin mixed with fentanyl in Hartford.¹⁶ Authorities also seized 2.5 kilograms of fentanyl (as well as 50,000 counterfeit Xanax pills and other drugs) in New Britain in May 2016, and another 25 kilograms in a tractor trailer on Route 34 Derby in December 2016.¹⁷
- March 2017:** A 30-year-old man in Hamden died after ingesting a counterfeit oxycodone made of fentanyl, acetaminophen and dipyrone.¹⁸

BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- April 2015:** The FDA warned 271 medical practices, five in Connecticut, to stop buying medicine from unlicensed drug distributor Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.¹⁹
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, 3 in Connecticut, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.²⁰
- 2012-2013:** The FDA warned more than 500 medical practices across the country—3 in Connecticut—to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.²¹

MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT BOTOX

- March 2016:** The FDA warned 13 Connecticut 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.²²
- July 2013:** The FDA warned 1 medical practice in Connecticut to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.²³

OTHER COUNTERFEIT DRUGS

- January 2021:** A raid on two mini-markets in Waterbury turned up hundreds of unidentified pills along with other drugs.²⁴
- February 2019:** Norwich resident Jason Chen received three years of probation for manufacturing and distributing more than 213,000 counterfeit Xanax tablets and thousands of units of anabolic steroids online.²⁵
- October 2018:** After investigators linked the counterfeit Xanax pills he sold to the death of a man in Seymour in July 2017, Shelton resident Kamil Golebiowski pleaded guilty to distributing alprazolam.²⁶
- March 2018:** West Hartford resident Pablo Texidor sentenced to 18 months in prison for possessing a pill press and making counterfeit oxycodone pills containing heroin.²⁷
- September 2017:** Ansonia resident and juvenile detention officer Jeffrey Gentile was sentenced to three years of probation for importing and selling counterfeit prescription pills including steroids and oxycodone.²⁸
- April 2017:** A federal grand jury in Bridgeport indicted Pyotr Levashov, charging that he controlled a network of more than 100,000 compromised computers that sent phony emails advertising counterfeit drugs, harvested users' logins and installed malware that intercepted bank account passwords.²⁹
- August 2016:** A former Newtown police sergeant was sentenced to 16 months in federal prison for his part in a distribution ring that imported ingredients from China so that they could manufacture and distribute steroids to area bodybuilders.³⁰
- July 2013:** A former traffic agent for the Westport Police, and a second man were charged with importing a pill press from China for the purpose of manufacturing counterfeit pain pills.³¹ David Wolvovsky, and Jason Oliviera pleaded guilty and were sentenced to four and three years probation respectively in 2015.³²
- April 2011:** Kurt Donsbach pleaded guilty to charges that he pretended to be a doctor and treated many people with illicit steroids and anti-inflammatories that he said would cure them. Among his victims is a Connecticut woman who suffers from severe osteoporosis as a result of Donsbach's fake treatments.³³
- February 2011:** A Providence, Rhode Island resident pleaded guilty to smuggling erectile dysfunction drugs from China that were falsely labelled as herbal dietary supplements, and sold them to retailers and distributors in Rhode Island, Connecticut and elsewhere.³⁴

Footnotes

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