



Washtenaw County Health Department

For Immediate Release

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Opium Deaths Increasing in Washtenaw County

Fentanyl, cocaine, and other substances involved in majority of overdose deaths

YPSILANTI, Mich., Sept. 13, 2022 – The number of Washtenaw County residents who died of an opioid overdose [increased by 28%](#) between 2020 and 2021. This is consistent with the increasing trend in opioid-related deaths across the U.S. since the start of the pandemic.

“Opioid-related deaths in Washtenaw decreased 26% between 2018 and 2019,” says Shannon Phillips, MPH, Washtenaw County Health Department epidemiologist. “While these rates remained stable during the first year of the pandemic, we are unfortunately seeing a rise in our community’s opioid-related deaths since 2021.”

82% of opioid overdose deaths among Washtenaw County residents from January 2021 to May 2022 involved fentanyl. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can be up to 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin.

Most local opioid-related deaths involved other substances as well (65%). Just over half of all opioid overdose deaths also involved stimulants, most often cocaine, followed by methamphetamine. Xylazine, a non-opioid tranquilizer not approved for human use, is also emerging among overdose deaths in Washtenaw. It is often added to illicit opioids, especially fentanyl.

“Most opioid-related deaths involve fentanyl, additional substances, or other drugs added to illicit opioids,” says Jimena Loveluck, MSW, Washtenaw County Health Department health officer. “People may unknowingly ingest fatal doses of fentanyl or other substances, which can seriously increase the risk of a life-threatening overdose. It’s incredibly important to use extreme caution: never use alone and have naloxone on hand.”

Most residents who died of an opioid overdose were White (81%), male (71%), and between 25-44 years old (60%). There were a disproportionate number of Black/African American residents who died from an opioid overdose (19%), compared to the county level population of Black/African American residents (12%).

Additional data is available in the Washtenaw County Health Department’s new September 2022 Opioid Report: <https://bit.ly/wchdopioid22>. Visit www.washtenaw.org/opioids for additional opioid reports and data.

Overdose prevention resources

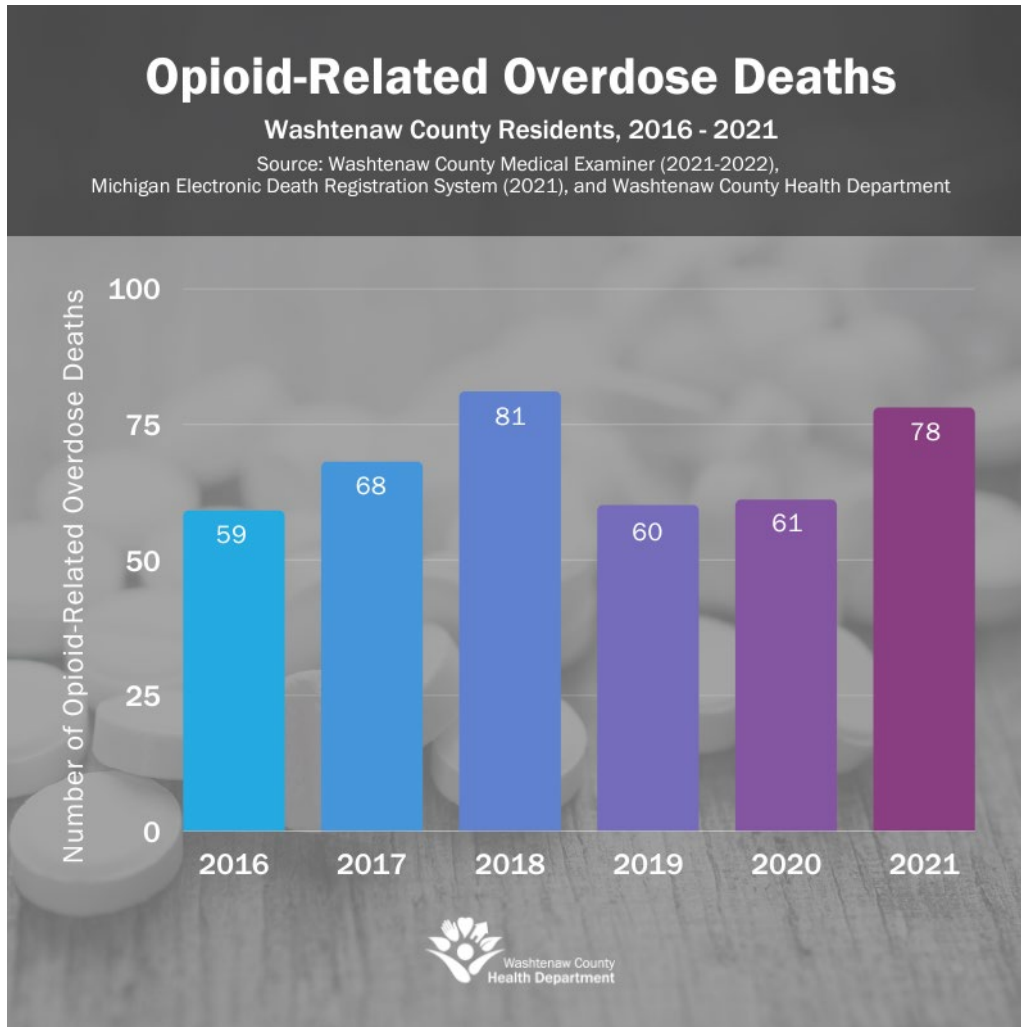
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Naloxone (also known as Narcan) is a safe medication that counteracts the dangerous effects of an opioid overdose. There are several ways to [get free naloxone](#) in Washtenaw County.

Recovery is possible. Find local stories of recovery, medication disposal sites, materials, and more harm reduction and treatment resources at www.washtenaw.org/ItsPossible.



Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Local public health information and updates are always available at www.washtenaw.org/health. The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpublichealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.

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