



Drug Information and Alerts

Aotearoa New Zealand

TURNING INFORMATION INTO ACTION

How High Alert responds to drug harm

WHO WE ARE

- High Alert (also known as Drug Information and Alerts Aotearoa New Zealand) is New Zealand's early warning system for dangerous drugs.
- Our mission is to reduce acute drug harm across Aotearoa by issuing drug early warnings.
- We work closely with health and community partners to detect novel and particularly dangerous substances in order to keep our communities safer.
- Common causes of acute drug harm:
 - Misrepresented/mis-sold drugs
 - Adulteration
 - Potent substances
 - New drugs to the market




INFORMATION SOURCES

- Police records
- Sudden death files
- PHF Science Tox and Drug Lab findings
- Customs seizures
- Hospitalisation data
- NPS vending websites
- International reporting
- Ambulance data
- Drug checking
- ED physicians
- Public submissions
- AOD treatment providers
- Online drug forums



WHAT WE DO

- Building a picture – seeking additional information and context
- Scientific analysis is the gold standard
- Standardised Risk Assessment

Risk Matrix						
Prevalence	The substance is widely circulating, in multiple geographic locations (4)	8	16	24	32	40
	A large number of people likely possess or could obtain this substance (3)	6	12	18	24	30
	A small number of people likely possess or could obtain this substance/unknown prevalence in the market (2)	4	8	12	16	20
	The substance is not in wider circulation (1)	2	4	6	8	10
		In most cases consumption of this substance will not result in harm requiring care(2)	In some cases, consumption will result in harm requiring care from others (e.g. Friend etc) (4)	In some cases, consumption will result in harm requiring care ambulance level care/ unknown level of harm (6)	In some cases, consumption will result in serious harm needing hospital level intervention (8)	In most cases consumption will result in serious harm needing hospital level intervention or death (10)
		Harm				

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CASE STUDY

Fake oxycodone tablets linked to serious harm

September 2023



TIMELINE

- **8 September:** High Alert identifies yellow tablets sold as oxycodone on the darknet. The product description identifies them as containing the potent synthetic opioid metonitazene. High Alert first issued a notification about metonitazene on 21 October 2022.
- **22 September:** A tablet is presented at drug checking presumed to be oxycodone. This sent to the PHF Science for further analysis.
- **23 September:** A death and serious hospitalisation occurs in the Hawke's Bay. Tablets are identified at the scene and High Alert facilitates further analysis.
- **25 September:** A serious hospitalisation is identified in Palmerston North. High Alert facilitates further analysis of tablets presented to the hospital.
- **26 September:** PHF Science confirm drug checking sample contains metonitazine and no oxycodone.
- **27 September:** High Alert issues new notification.



REACH

- Emailed directly to 7,295 subscribers
- Reached 19,846 people in the first 48 hours
- Social media content shared by local community pages
- Significant social media commentary, especially on Reddit
- Two unusual effects reports from members of the public
- Media coverage across Stuff, The New Zealand Herald, Newshub and NewstalkZB

Fake oxycodone tablets linked to serious harm

Notification

Opioids

Nationwide,

Fake oxycodone tablets, containing metonitazene, may be linked to a recent death and serious hospitalisations in New Zealand



How to identify the drug

- Round yellow tablets
- Bevelled edge
- Break line through middle
- No other markings
- Could also be available as a yellow powder made of crushed tablets



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NEW NOTIFICATION 🚨 Fake oxycodone tablets may be linked to a recent death and serious hospitalisations in New Zealand. These tablets have been found to contain meton... See more



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Fake oxycodone tablets linked to serious harm

Learn more

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SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

- Sign up to receive our notifications at **highalert.org.nz**.
- Don't hesitate to reach out - we are always happy to share our knowledge.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

- If you have any information about new drug trends or hear about concerning or unexpected effects, let us know at **highalert@highalert.org.nz**
- Spread the word – tell patients and colleagues.



THANK YOU



Contact us at highalert@highalert.org.nz

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