



**MONTEREY COUNTY PRESCRIBE SAFE INITIATIVE OBSERVES OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY WITH PRESS CONFERENCE AND RESOURCE FAIR
MEDIA ADVISORY**

Media Contacts

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Press Conference: Dramatic increase in fentanyl overdose cases and death in Monterey County requires action

Monterey County, Calif. Fatal overdoses from opioids have increased eight-fold since 2018 — prompting agencies, organizations, and individuals to step up their efforts to decrease opioid misuse and to ask the public for help. Monterey Prescribe Safe Initiative, Montage Health, and the City of Monterey are asking the media to spread the word about the overdoses in our community and to invite community members to the Overdose Awareness Day Resource Fair on August 31 at the Monterey Convention Center.

Press Conference Details

What: Press conference with Monterey County health and law enforcement officials, healthcare providers, treatment centers, and others, accompanied by a symbolic field of flags on Colton Hall lawn

When: 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, August 30, 2022

Where: Colton Hall lawn, 580 Pacific Street, Monterey

Speakers:

Master of Ceremonies: Ed Smith, Vice Mayor, City of Monterey

Healthcare: Dr. Reb Close, Emergency department, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, and physician leader, Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative

Law Enforcement: Assistant Chief of Police, Mike Bruno, City of Monterey

Parent: Michele Henderson, mother of child who passed in Carmel Valley due to fentanyl poisoning
Ohana, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula's child, adolescent and family behavioral health program: Krista Reuther, LCSW, MPH, Ohana Community Health and Prevention

Recovery: Pastor Mike Casey, Bridge Restoration Ministry

Other attendees available for media interviews:

Casey Grover, MD, Emergency department, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, and physician leader, Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative

PK Diffenbaugh, Superintendent, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

Ralph Porras, Superintendent, Pacific Grove Unified School District

Background: In Monterey County, fentanyl deaths from 2018 to 2021 increased by more than 8 times, with a majority of the deaths in 2020 being those who were 30 years and under.

Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative, a collaborative of more than 35 local business and agencies, has been addressing the opioid addiction problem since 2014. In 2018, Monterey County had the second-lowest opioid-related death rate of any county in California as a lot of great progress had been made. But, in the last few years, counterfeit medications have entered the market, many with a toxic or lethal dose of fentanyl, causing a staggering increase in opioid-related overdoses and deaths. Fentanyl is a very powerful opioid, 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. There were 65 opioid-related deaths in both 2020 and 2021. Many of the deaths over the past couple of years are potentially linked to the counterfeit pills containing fentanyl, made to look like prescription medications. Many who take this pill were unaware that they were taking a deadly dose of fentanyl.

At Tuesday's news conference, Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative partners will provide the latest information on the counterfeit medications and their toll, and ask the public to help share the information. The partners are also seeking help in tracking the sources of the deadly drugs, provide resource information for those who need it, and let people know about the Overdose Awareness Day Resource Fair on August 31.

Flag display

More than 500 flags will be displayed on Colton Hall lawn to honor those whose lives have been affected by addiction. These flags were provided by Montage Health Foundation to the Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative for families, loved ones, and organizations to recognize those we have lost, those in recovery, and those who have been impacted by addiction.

Overdose Awareness Day Resource Fair

August 31 is Overdose Awareness Day. Community members are invited to the Monterey Conference Center on August 31, 3-5 p.m. to learn more about how to rescue someone from an overdose and how we can prevent, treat, and recover from addiction. Several Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative partners will be in attendance with resources, information, and more to assist those who want to know more about

how to address addiction. Free Narcan, an FDA-approved naloxone medication that saves lives by reversing the effects of an opioid (including fentanyl) overdose will be provided for free to attendees. Supplies are limited, one box per attendee, first come, first served. Community members can park in the Downtown West Garage at 340 Tyler Street; the first hour is free. The event is supported with funding by the Montage Health Foundation and Monterey Peninsula Foundation.

What can community members do?

1. Attend the Overdose Awareness Day Resource Fair at the Monterey Conference Center, Wednesday, August 31, 2022 from 3–5 p.m.
2. Residents should NOT take any medications not prescribed to them through a doctor's office and pharmacy. Do not buy or accept pills or candy from any other source as many pills look exactly like their medication counterparts, but can contain lethal doses of opioid. And, most recently, fentanyl was detected in a form that looked like rainbow candy.
3. Parents should talk to their children about pills or other items offered to them of unknown origin.
4. Community members should notify law enforcement if they have ANY information that could lead to the origin of the counterfeit pills or other illegal drugs. Investigators can be called at (831) 646-6926 or if you wish to remain anonymous, contact the Tip-Line (831) 646-3840. Law enforcement officers say their goal is to find the suppliers and dealers, not the users who are the victims being caught up in the epidemic.
5. Community members should have a supply of naloxone, the reversal agent for an opioid overdose and be trained on how to use it. Naloxone can be purchased at a local pharmacy, or provided for free at a list of resources on Montage Health's [Prescribe Safe website](#), or at the Overdose Awareness Day Resource Fair on August 31.
6. If an overdose is suspected, 911 should be called immediately to obtain medical assistance, even if a first responder has naloxone and is trained on how to use it.

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ABOUT MONTEREY COUNTY PRESCRIBE SAFE INITIATIVE

The Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative (MCPSI) is a multi-organizational collaborative effort in Monterey County with the goal of improving safety of prescription drugs, reducing inappropriate prescribing of prescription pain medications and sedatives, increasing awareness of the dangers of street-provided substances, increasing access to treatment for addiction, and improving education to the public and medical community on the dangers of prescription drugs, street drugs, and other addictive substances. For more information and resources, visit www.montagehealth.org/prescribesafe.

ABOUT MONTAGE HEALTH

Montage Health is the nonprofit parent company of a family of organizations dedicated to improving lives by delivering exceptional care and inspiring the pursuit of optimal health. Through its subsidiaries and its partnerships with doctors and other clinicians, healthcare and community organizations, and, most importantly community members, Montage Health is dedicated to care that is coordinated across all care settings to meet each person's goals and needs. Montage Health's family of companies includes Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Montage Medical Group, MoGo Urgent Care, Aspire Health, Montage Health Foundation, and Montage Wellness Center. For more information, visit www.montagehealth.org.

ABOUT THE CITY OF MONTEREY

The City of Monterey is a waterfront community where citizens, community organizations, businesses, military partners, nonprofit organizations, and city government work together to ensure that the community retains its hometown identity, high quality of life, and natural beauty. Monterey is at the heart of the Monterey Peninsula, serving as the region's business, financial, government, and services core with urban amenities common to a city of much larger size. At the same time, the city provides a small-town atmosphere and 16 distinct neighborhoods that range from historic adobes to mid-century modern homes. First incorporated in 1850 and with its present charter adopted in 1925, Monterey is a charter city and operates under the Council-Manager form of government. Home to 30,218 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), Monterey is the third-largest city in Monterey County. More about Monterey is available at <https://monterey.org/about>.

Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative partners:



