



# CHART

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

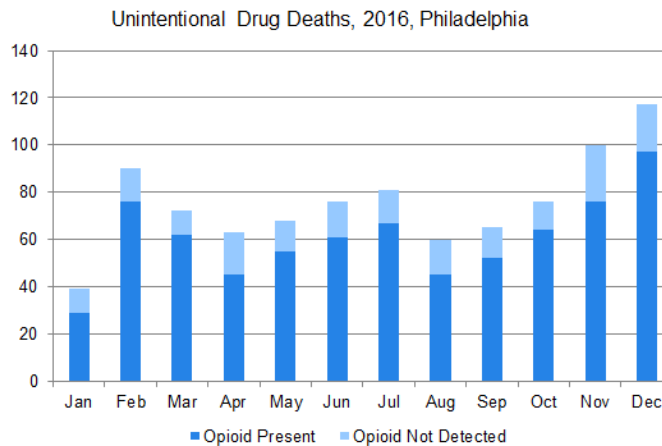
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Philadelphia Department of Public Health  
Thomas Farley, MD, MPH, Commissioner

## 2016 Overdoses From Opioids in Philadelphia

The inaugural issue of *CHART* highlighted the effects of the nationwide epidemic of deaths from drug overdoses, focusing specifically on the role of opioids in this crisis. This issue provides an update to that issue, with statistics from 2016 in Philadelphia.

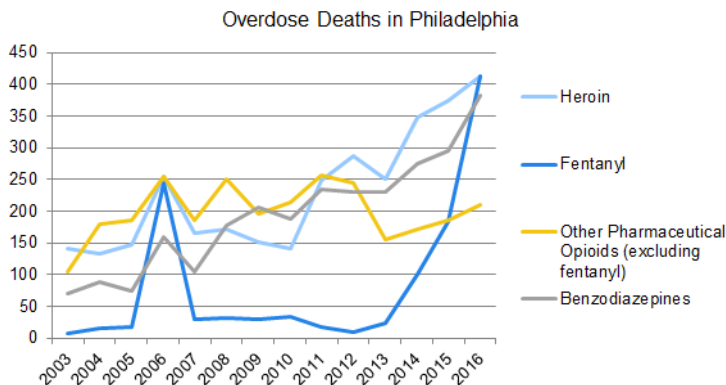
### More than 900 People Died in Philadelphia in 2016 from a Drug Overdose



- 907 deaths from drug overdoses were recorded in Philadelphia in 2016.
- One hundred or more deaths were recorded in both November and December.
- Opioids were found in more than 80% of all drug deaths in Philadelphia in 2016.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Medical Examiner’s Office)

### Overdose Deaths Largely Due to Heroin, Fentanyl, and Benzodiazepines

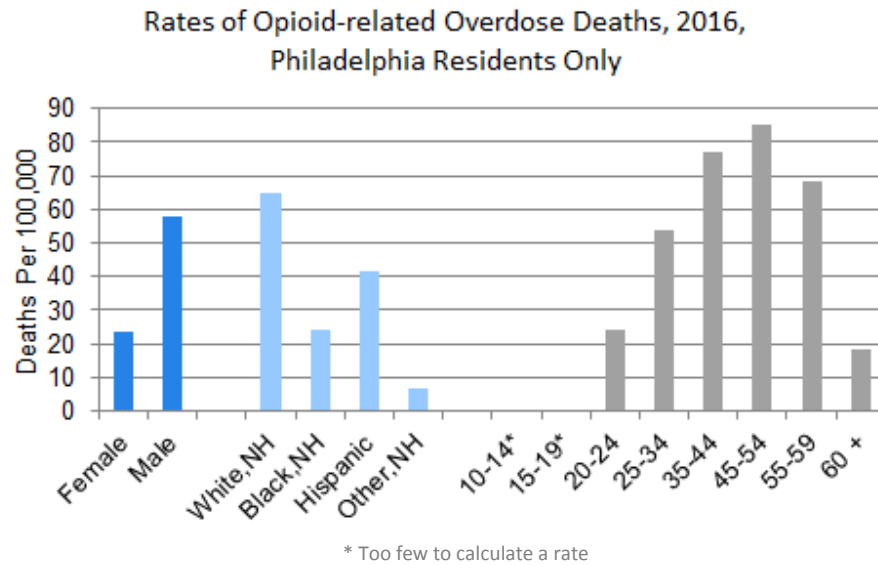


- Deaths involving heroin, fentanyl, pharmaceutical opioids and benzodiazepine continued to climb in 2016.
- Deaths where fentanyl was found more than doubled in one year going from 184 to 413.
- Deaths involving heroin reached an all-time high, eclipsing 400 for the first time ever, and contributing to nearly half of the city’s overdose deaths.
- Deaths involving benzodiazepines similarly reached an all-time high, at nearly 400 deaths in 2016.

\* Multiple drugs might be detected in an individual decedent

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Medical Examiner’s Office)

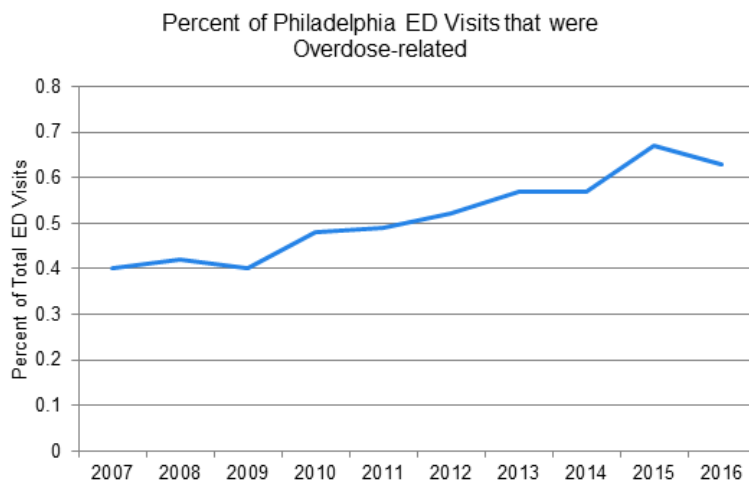
## Opioid Overdose Deaths Peaked in Ages 35-54



- All death rates were higher in 2016 than were found in 2015.
- Opioid-related overdose deaths were overwhelmingly male, with a rate nearly tripled that found in women.
- All races saw an increase in opioid-related overdose rates in 2016. Whites were most at risk, with rates more than double those experienced by African-Americans, and 50% higher than those experienced by Hispanics.
- Those aged 35-59 experienced the highest rates of death from opioid-related overdoses.

(Sources: PDPH, Medical Examiner's Office and 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, US Census Bureau)

## Hospital Emergency Departments See Increasing Overdoses



- For the second year in a row, more than 6,400 emergency department visits to reporting Philadelphia hospitals were for overdose-related complaints.
- Overdose-related complaints in emergency departments rose by more than 50% since 2007.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control)

## What Can Be Done

### The Department of Public Health is:

- Working with the Mayor's Task Force to Combat the Opioid Epidemic to develop a plan to better prevent prescription opioid addiction, increase treatment for those who are dependent, and treat drug overdoses.
- Distributing guidelines to physicians and other prescribers on reducing inappropriate prescribing of opioids.
- Developing a media campaign warning consumers about the inherent risks of prescription opioids.

### Health care providers can:

- Prescribe opioid painkillers less often, in lower doses, and for shorter duration, following guidelines from the CDC or the Department of Public Health.
- Avoid, whenever possible, prescribing opioid pain relievers in patients who are also taking benzodiazepines and avoid prescribing benzodiazepines in patients taking opioids because the combination of benzodiazepines and opioids is so dangerous.
- Register for and use the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program database when prescribing opioids.
- Help patients who are dependent on opioids get treatment. This can be through referral to methadone treatment or prescribing buprenorphine (Suboxone™), a medication that reduces withdrawal symptoms and is safer than methadone. With readily available training and certification, office- or clinic-based physicians can prescribe buprenorphine.

### People can:

- Obtain the antidote naloxone (Narcan™), which can immediately reverse a potentially fatal opioid overdose. Naloxone is available for purchase at pharmacies in Pennsylvania without a prescription under a "standing order" signed by the Physician General.

## Resources

- Prevention Point of Philadelphia provides education and training to expand access to naloxone.
- The Division of Addiction Services of Philadelphia's DBHIDS, provides tools and resources for healthcare providers, people with drug dependence, and their families. Those seeking treatment who lack health insurance should contact the Behavioral Health Special Initiative at 215-546-1200. Those who have medical assistance or Medicaid should contact Community Behavioral Health at 888-545-2600.

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