

For Immediate Release

Contact: Susan Cerniglia, Communications Manager
Washtenaw County Health Department
ringlers@washtenaw.org
734-544-6759

Opioid Deaths Involving Cocaine Increasing in Washtenaw County

YPSILANTI, Mich., Oct. 31, 2018 – Nearly half of deaths related to opioids in Washtenaw County between Jan. and Aug. this year have involved cocaine. This is an increase compared to previous years, where under a quarter of opioid deaths involved cocaine each year between 2013 and 2017.

“We are monitoring the local opioid crisis very closely,” says Jimena Loveluck, deputy health officer at the Washtenaw County Health Department. “We’re notifying the public about this spike so residents and professionals will be better able to understand risks and respond to this new information.”

Nearly all of the deaths involving both opioids and cocaine this year in Washtenaw County have involved fentanyl. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms that fentanyl – a synthetic opioid that can be up to 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin – is being mixed into cocaine, as well as methamphetamine, counterfeit opioid and benzodiazepine pills and heroin. Fentanyl can cause immediate respiratory depression and death. It takes as little as 3mg, or the size of a grain of sand, to kill an average adult male.

"Deaths due to fentanyl alone or in combination with other drugs, such as heroin or cocaine, is on the rise," says Jeff Jentzen, MD, PhD, chief medical examiner for Washtenaw County. "Cocaine appears to be regaining popularity. Individuals using heroin or cocaine may knowingly or unwittingly ingest fatal doses of fentanyl."

Similar trends have also been documented in [other states](#). Extreme caution should be used when ingesting any of these drugs. Most purchasers and users of these drugs are not able to detect if fentanyl is in the drug.

Reversing overdoses that involve fentanyl may require immediate and additional Naloxone, according to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Naloxone is a medication that counteracts the dangerous effects of an opioid overdose. Local information about Naloxone trainings and supplies is available on the [Health Department website](#).

[Fifty-five](#) Washtenaw County residents died of opioid related overdoses between Jan. and Aug. 2018 – an average of one to two deaths every week. This is over 30 percent higher than the first eight months of 2017.

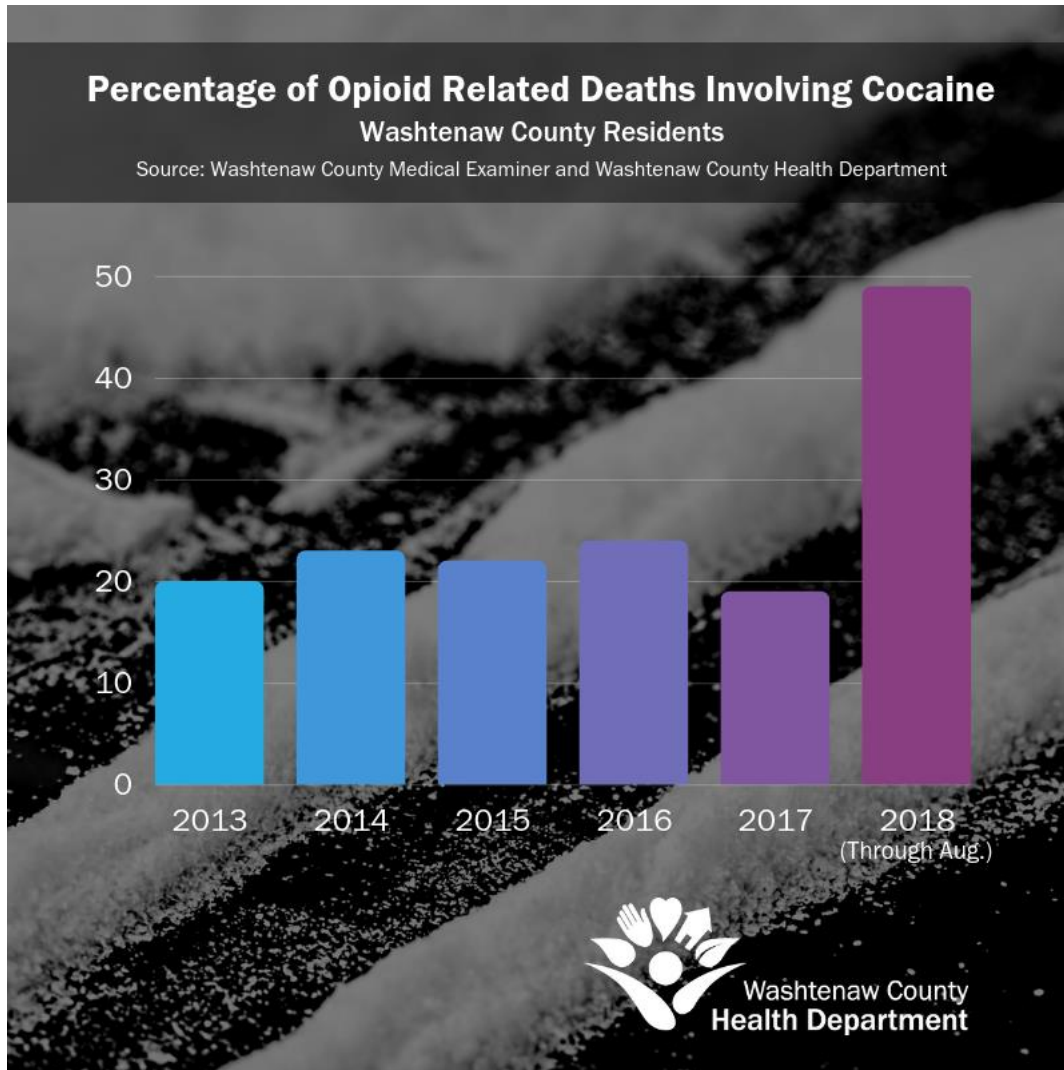
Additional data and treatment resources are available at www.washtenaw.org/opioids and www.whiopioidproject.org.

Washtenaw County Health Department
555 Towner Street • Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Phone: 734-544-6700 • Fax: 734-544-6705
washtenaw.org/health



Environmental Health Division
705 N Zeeb Road • Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Phone: 734-222-3800 • Fax: 734-222-3930
washtenaw.org/envhealth

The Washtenaw Health Initiative Opioid Project, along with the Health Department and other community partners, hosted a Washtenaw County Opioid Summit earlier this month. The summit brought together over 300 professionals, providers, and community members to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and develop community-driven solutions.



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.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

###