

HEALTH & FITNESS

San Francisco records 1st overdose death caused by new deadly opioid cychlorphine



By [Tara Campbell](#)

Saturday, April 25, 2026 1:02PM



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San Francisco Public Health officials are warning about a new synthetic opioid called cychlorphine.

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- San Francisco Public Health officials are sounding the alarm on a new synthetic opioid.

"We believe it is more potent than fentanyl. It was found we believe in someone using a counterfeit pill," said Daniel Tsai, director San Francisco Department of Public Health

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It's called cychlorphine, and for the first time it's showing up in San Francisco; linked to an overdose death earlier this month.

"The first time DEA saw it was in 2024 at one of our labs down in Florida," said Bob Beris, special agent in Charge of the DEA San Francisco Field Division. "I mean, a pill can show up in Chicago and, you know, 30 hours later, it can be in San Francisco, you know, using the I-80, the 99, I-5. These are major corridors."

Beris say cychlorphine could show up in just about any other drug.

"It can be mixed into a pill. It can be sold as a powder. It can be mixed in with cocaine. It can be sold as cocaine. Again, just because we haven't seen some of these examples yet doesn't mean it's not out there," he said.

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And making the drug most concerning is it's difficult to test if it's in other drugs.

"Importantly, it's not detected on the available fentanyl test strips that are out there. So it's very important to really try to avoid counterfeit pills altogether," said Dr. Philip Coffin, director of the Center on Substance Use and Health at SFDPH.

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It's also believed to be resistant to Narcan, also known as Naloxone, the nasal spray that can reverse an opioid overdose. Officials warning it could take multiple doses for it to kick in.

"Code Tenderloin has doubled the amount of Narcan we pass out per night. And also informing the community, we work in promotional preventative rehabilitative care. And we have to inform the community and educate them," said Douglas Liu, executive director of Community Health Workers Code Tenderloin.

The public health department and the DEA both reiterated the importance of staying away from counterfeit pills, saying the drug supply is as unpredictable as ever.



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