

Methadone Warning from FDA

In a new warning issued by the FDA, states that overdoses of methadone--used as a replacement drug for opiate addicts but also as an increasingly popular pain killer--can lead to heart and breathing problems and death.

The Associated Press reported November 27 that the warning notes that methadone can cause slow or shallow breathing and potentially deadly changes in the users' heart rate. Dangerous side effects and deaths have been reported among people using the drug as a painkiller.

While methadone is effective as a painkiller for 4-8 hours, the drug can stay in the body for up to 59 hours. Therefore, patients who take subsequent doses to relieve pain can unknowingly build up toxic levels of the drug over a period of time.

Doctors are urged by the FDA to be cautious when prescribing the drug and to monitor patients very closely, giving strong warnings to users about taking more of the drug than prescribed.

More than 2 million prescriptions were written by doctors for methadone as a painkiller in 2003, and the use of the drug is still rising. An estimated 2,452 overdose deaths were attributed to methadone in 2003, up from 623 in 1999.

Source: [Associated Press, November 27, 2006](#)

Cocaine use increases in Florida

In recent years, cocaine use has spiked in Florida, fueling fears of a resurgence in use of the stimulant that came to symbolize the drug wars of the 1980s, according to [Medical News Today](#) on October 21.

Data recently released by the University of Florida and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement showed that cocaine-related deaths have been on the rise, nearly doubling in the state over the past five year period. The cocaine death rate increased from 150 per 100,000 residents in 2000 to nearly 300 per 100,000 in 2005.

Also noted is that the death rate climbed the highest in college towns and wealthy enclaves, suggesting that cocaine retains some of the broad allure that it did in the Eighties.

University of Florida researcher, Mark Gold, M.D., said "With death reports there is not fudge factor." He said, "Other states will show the same thing: That we are in the early stages of a new cocaine epidemic that is being led by the rich and famous and students with large amounts of disposable income, and that is responsible for more emergency-room visits and more cocaine-related deaths than we have seen at any time since the last cocaine epidemic."

Source: [Medical News Today, October 21, 2006](#)

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Noteworthy...

★ The "Cocaine" energy drink has been banned from the 7-Eleven convenience stores according to the [Associated Press](#) on October 25. Retailers in New York have also been pressured by local politicians to stop selling the drink.

★ Bar owners in the U.K. have reported that some young drinkers have taken to snorting vodka in order to get drunk more quickly. It is said that over a period of time it will damage your nose. Nick Tegadine, Alcohol Problems Advisory Service in Derby, England, said "It's not a very nice thing to do... and when you're collapsed on the floor, you certainly don't look very clever." He added, "I hope it's only a passing phase, but it will pass much more quickly if club owners will act responsibly, and if police and trading standards get together and say this is a bad idea and don't do it."