

Press Release

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: New Family of Narcotics Linked to Overdoses**

According to The Washington Post, samples from an overdose victims evaluated by a forensic chemist at the Public Health Laboratory in Washington revealed a new drug was up to ten times more powerful than fentanyl, the synthetic opioid that accounts for the majority of US overdose deaths. Known as nitazenes, these new, more potent synthetic opioids are arriving just as the city grapples with the epidemic of addiction sweeping America, with deaths from drug overdose surging to record levels. Being structurally unrelated to fentanyl, little is known about the harm potential of these compounds.

The discovery of the new drug has raised alarms because they could be less vulnerable to some of the primary resources used to prevent overdoses, such as fentanyl testing strips and the overdose antidote Narcan, which is also known as Naloxone. The Public Health Lab discovered two nitazenes — synthetic opioids — in used syringes submitted to the lab as part of the District's Needle Exchange Program. Studies show nitazenes are more potent than fentanyl, which means additional doses of Naloxone may be needed to treat overdoses. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fentanyl is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. Scientists say that nitazene is even more powerful.

In spite of the concerning new discovery, fentanyl remains the primary threat to opioid users in D.C. and is a major factor in the majority of U.S. drug overdoses.

Public health officials have warned that fentanyl is often detected in supplies of other drugs such as cocaine, sometimes leading to fatal overdoses among drug users who aren't aware what they are consuming. D.C. saw an estimated 498 fatal drug overdoses over 12 months during the coronavirus pandemic. It is unclear how many were caused by fentanyl. U.S. drug overdose deaths hit a record high for a 12-month period earlier this year, with more than 100,306 such deaths being recorded in the year ending in April, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that were released in November.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled. "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on

[www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).