

Drug Facts: Fentanyl



What Is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. It is a prescription drug that is also made and used illegally. Like morphine, it is a medicine that is typically used to treat patients with severe pain, especially after surgery. It is also used to treat people with chronic pain who are physically tolerant to other opioids.

The fentanyl most often associated with recent overdoses is made in labs. This synthetic fentanyl is sold illegally as a powder, dropped onto blotter paper, put in eye droppers and nasal sprays, or made into pills that resemble prescription opioids.

Overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids are primarily driven by illegally manufactured fentanyl, including fentanyl analogs, like Carfentanyl. Carfentanil is 10,000X stronger than morphine, and 100X more potent than fentanyl. In powdered form, fentanyl and its analogs cannot be absorbed through the skin, it must enter the blood stream and reach the brain to cause an overdose.

In 2023, fentanyl was implicated in over 1,000 deaths. In 2023, the DEA seized over 80 million fentanyl-laced fake pills and almost 12 thousand pounds of powdered fentanyl.

Common street names for fentanyl include Apace, China White, Dance Fever, He-Man, Poison, Tango & Cash, and Mexican Blue

How Do People Misuse Fentanyl?

Illegally produced fentanyl is sold alone or in combination with heroin, cocaine, or other substances, and has been identified in fake pills mimicking pharmaceutical drugs like oxycodone M-30 tablets. This puts people who

don't know that they're consuming fentanyl at a high risk for overdose. This can be avoided by using drugs prescribed by a doctor and given by a real pharmacist and following prescription directions.

Some people misuse a legal prescription by using more than the doctor prescribed, cutting skin patches, or consuming the gel in the patches orally or by injection. However, this is less common.

How Does Fentanyl Affect The Brain?

Fentanyl works by binding to the opioid receptors in the areas of the brain that control pain and emotions. Other effects include:

- Confusion
- Nausea
- Problems Breathing
- Sedation
- Extreme happiness
- Constipation
- Drowsiness
- Unconsciousness



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Can People Overdose On Fentanyl?

Yes. It takes as little as 2mg to be deadly. That's about how much can fit on the tip of a pencil. When someone overdoses on fentanyl, their breathing can slow or stop. This can decrease the amount of oxygen that reaches the brain, which can lead to brain damage or death.



A lethal dose of fentanyl

Signs of an opioid overdose include:

- Purple or blue lips or nailbeds
- Pinpoint pupils
- Clammy skin
- Slow, shallow, or lack of breathing
- Loss of consciousness

How Can Fentanyl Overdose Be Treated?

Before using, it is best to use a fentanyl test strip to check the drugs. A positive test indicates there is fentanyl present. If the drugs do contain fentanyl, and someone still plans to use there are steps to follow:

- Make sure naloxone is available.
- Never use alone.

Naloxone is a medicine that can treat an opioid overdose when given right away. It is not harmful, and should be given anytime an overdose is suspected. It can quickly restore normal respiration to a person whose breathing has slowed or stopped as a result of an overdose.

Since drug dealers mix fentanyl with other drugs, individuals who use illicit substances or counterfeit pills and their loved ones should obtain naloxone and keep it on their person or in their home. Naloxone is available as a prepackaged spray or as an injectable medication.

If a person overdoses, 911 should be called immediately and the first dose of naloxone should be administered. Naloxone usually works within 2 to 5 minutes. If the individual does not respond, give the second dose.

[Drug Free CT](#) offers resources such as lockboxes, safe disposal bags, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, as well as provides information on where to obtain naloxone.

How Is Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Treated?

Fentanyl use can lead to an opioid use disorder. Medication paired with behavioral therapies has been shown to be effective in treating people with an OUD.

Medication: Buprenorphine and methadone work by binding to the same opioid receptors in the brain as fentanyl, reducing cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Another medicine, naltrexone, blocks opioid receptors and prevents fentanyl from having an effect. People can discuss treatment options with their healthcare provider.

Counseling: Behavioral therapies for addiction to opioids like fentanyl can help people modify their attitudes and behaviors related to drug use; effectively manage triggers and stress; increase healthy life skills; and help them sustain their recovery. Examples include cognitive behavioral therapy, contingency management, and motivational interviewing.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

www.ct.gov/DMHAS

Drug Free CT

<https://www.drugfreect.org/>

Nora App

<https://egov.ct.gov/norasaves/>

Live Loud

<https://liveloud.org/>

24/7 Access Line

1.800.563.4086

2-1-1 of Connecticut

www.211ct.org or call 2-1-1

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

