

Risks of fentanyl exposure

The use and prevalence of fentanyl have increased significantly in recent years, with many people unaware they're using fentanyl. Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine.

The likelihood that other people will unintentionally come into contact with fentanyl rises with its use and presence. People can take some precautionary measures to reduce their risk of fentanyl exposure. Universal precautions will drastically reduce the chance of exposure to fentanyl through ingesting, inhalation or a needle stick.

The signs of fentanyl intoxication include:

- Disorientation
- Pinpoint pupils
- Respiratory distress, depression, or arrest.
- Drowsiness
- Loss of consciousness
- Nausea/vomiting

In case of exposure to fentanyl, and the appearance of these symptoms, call the National Poison Control Center at **(800) 222-1222**.

Prevention

Preventing fentanyl overdose involves taking precautions, such as:

- Avoiding all street drugs
- Never take more than the prescribed dose of a medication
- Never mix drugs
- Talk to your doctor about alternative plan management options
- Having Narcan on hand for an emergency treatment for an overdose.



Background

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What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that resembles morphine. Doctors prescribe it for acute pain therapy, but it has also been made illegally and distributed on the black market as a recreational medication. The danger of fentanyl increases when it is used with other substances, including heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

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The Dangers of Fentanyl



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Safety precautions

- **Avoid Contact:** Do not touch unknown powders, pills, or liquids. If you see suspected drugs, do not attempt to clean them up yourself; contact law enforcement.
- **Wash Skin Immediately:** If you suspect skin contact, wash the area thoroughly with soap and cool water as soon as possible. Do not use hand sanitizer or bleach, as alcohol can enhance absorption through the skin.
- **Prevent Ingestion:** Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a potentially contaminated surface.
- **Safer Use Practices:** For those using substances, harm reduction practices include using less of each substance, never using alone (staggering use so someone is always alert), and using fentanyl test strips to check the supply.
- Avoid eating, drinking, smoking, or using the bathroom in areas where fentanyl is either known or suspected.



Symptoms of fentanyl overdose

The symptoms of a fentanyl overdose include:

- Lack of movement
- Possible choking
- Gurgling sounds or snoring
- Inability to be woken up
- Cold and clammy skin
- Tiny pupils
- Slow or absent breathing
- Loss of coordination
- Blue lips and nails
- Slurred speech or confusion

Call 911, or seek medical help immediately, if you suspect someone has overdosed on fentanyl or another opioid. Anyone exhibiting symptoms of an opioid overdose should be given Narcan. Considering how powerful fentanyl can be, it sometimes takes several doses of Narcan to return a person to normal breathing.

