

LET’S GET TALKING ABOUT FENTANYL

One of the most important things you can do as a parent to prevent your child from being exposed to fentanyl is to sit down with them and have a conversation about it. Before you begin, you should know the facts about fentanyl. Fentanyl has been the primary drug behind the dramatic rise in drug overdoses, so talking to your children about it has never been more important.

What Is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a very strong synthetic opioid drug that is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin. Fentanyl is widely used in emergency departments and hospitals and it can also be prescribed. However, the recent fentanyl-related deaths are linked to illegally made drugs.

Why Is It So Dangerous?

Because just 2mg (0.0000044 lbs) is enough to be lethal, the mixture of fentanyl with other substances can quickly lead to a fatal overdose without anyone even knowing that they have consumed it. Fentanyl cannot be smelled or tasted, making it nearly impossible to tell if drugs contain or have been laced with the opioid without special fentanyl test strips.

More than two thirds of the nearly 108,000 overdose deaths in the U.S. were because of synthetic opioids like fentanyl.



RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html

Drug Enforcement Administration

www.dea.gov/resources/facts-about-fentanyl

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A Parent’s Guide to FENTANYL



WHAT DOES FENTANYL LOOK LIKE?



Fentanyl is typically available in two main types: powder and liquid.

- **Powdered** – It is often pressed into pills that look exactly like prescription pills, such as Percocet or Xanax.
- **Liquid** – It can often serve as a replacement for heroin. There are also reports of fentanyl being packaged as nasal sprays and eye drops. Additionally, liquid fentanyl can be dropped onto paper or small candies.

“Rainbow fentanyl” is a newer phenomenon in which fentanyl is mixed with dyes and either pressed into brightly colored pills or sold as powder in various colors. It is often made to look like candy.

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How To Talk To Your Child About Fentanyl

Because fentanyl can be present in various drugs, increasing the risk of accidental exposure and harm, initiating a conversation with your child about the dangers of fentanyl is a crucial step in ensuring their safety.

- Discuss the different kinds of drugs that could be mixed with fentanyl and provide guidance on refusal skills if they encounter these substances.
- Remind your child to tell you if something doesn't look quite right, such as if a package seems tampered with or is already open.
- Remind your child to not take medications from anyone, and to not eat food from strangers.
- Stay calm and ensure that your child has an understanding of what they may see and what they should do in specific situations. Role playing and practicing saying "No" is also helpful.
- For teenagers, explain that illegal fentanyl is common in street drugs like oxy, cocaine, MDMA, heroin and methamphetamine. Emphasize that because it has no taste, color or smell, the drug cannot be detected, making it extremely dangerous.

Having a daily talk is a great way to touch base about what is happening both inside and outside of school. During that talk you can better understand their world. Severe mood swings and a change in friends may be signs of substance use and/or a mental health concern.

Fentanyl comes in various forms. Stay vigilant to protect your loved ones.

Having A Productive Discussion

You can get the most out of discussions with your children about drugs by following a few rules:

- 1) Speak honestly with your kids about choices and risky behaviors.
- 2) Listen to what they have to say, respect their opinions, and do not be judgmental.
- 3) Encourage positive friendships and help them find things that interest them.
- 4) Create a safe space for them to ask questions.
- 5) Stay educated on current drug trends so you can teach your children about them.

Recognizing An Overdose

The primary symptoms of an overdose include:

- Small, constricted "pinpoint pupils"
- Cold, clammy skin
- Limp body
- Skin, lips, or nails turn blue due to a lack of oxygen
- Loss of consciousness
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds

The presence of three symptoms such as coma, pinpoint pupils, and breathing issues strongly suggests opioid intoxication.



How To Avoid A Fentanyl Tragedy

There are things you can do before an overdose occurs that can put you in the best position to avoid a tragedy.

- The first thing to do is to talk with them about the importance of not using drugs. The best way for your child to keep from accidentally overdosing is to not take drugs.
- In 2023 the Food and Drug Administration approved the first nonprescription naloxone product, Narcan® 4 milligram (mg) nasal spray. This life-saving medication is used to reverse opioid overdose and is available directly to consumers over-the-counter. While it can be difficult to acknowledge that your children may be using drugs, having Narcan® readily available can be the difference between recovering from a fentanyl overdose and death.

What To Do In The Event Of An Overdose

- **Call 9-1-1 immediately!** Every second counts.
- Administer the life-saving medication, naloxone, if you have some.
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
- Turn the person on their side to prevent choking.
- Stay with the person until paramedics arrive.



Myth

Contrary to widely-circulated stories, fentanyl cannot be readily absorbed through the skin, nor can you overdose on fentanyl by touching a doorknob or dollar bill. As a result, it is safe to help people who have overdosed on fentanyl. Stories of people overdosing after incidental contact are not accurate.