

Fentanyl & synthetic opioids

Learn how to protect yourself and people you care about

Fentanyl overdose deaths have been on the rise in both Clark County and Washington state, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic started.



About fentanyl

When we refer to “fentanyl” below we mean fentanyl and related drugs that are very strong opioids, are fast-acting, are made illicitly, and do not come from a pharmacy.

- Fentanyl is a very potent synthetic opioid, **50 times stronger than heroin**, and up to **100 times stronger than morphine**. Every person is different, but an adult can overdose from two salt-sized grains of fentanyl.
- Cheap to make and very strong, fentanyl is mixed into pills and powders (heroin, stimulants, cocaine, pain pills, benzodiazepine, and more).
- There is no way to know if a drug has fentanyl in it based on how it looks, smells, or tastes. Fake pills can look like normal pharmaceuticals, and may seem safe, but **any pill not from a pharmacy could contain fentanyl**.
- There’s no way to know how much fentanyl is in a drug or if it’s evenly distributed into each dose, pill, or powder, even within the same batch.
- Anyone who uses powdered drugs or takes pills that were not prescribed to them is at risk for a fentanyl-related overdose.

MYTH: *You can overdose on fentanyl by just touching it.*



CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

PUBLIC HEALTH
HARM REDUCTION

FACT:

There have been no confirmed cases of first responders or bystanders overdosing on fentanyl from responding to a fentanyl overdose.

Fentanyl: *protect yourself and people you care about*

Reduce the risk of fentanyl overdose

- Assume any pill, powder, or other drug you get from a dealer, friend or online source probably has fentanyl in it.
- If you're going to use while you're alone, call a friend or **Never Use Alone** so they can send help if needed: 1.800.484.3731
- Carry at least 3 doses of naloxone (brand name *Narcan*® or *Evzio*®) and let others know where you keep it.
- Start with a very small amount and use **s-l-o-w-l-y** so you can stop right away if something doesn't feel right.
- Go one person at a time. Watch and wait before the next person uses.
- Avoid mixing drugs, like opioids with downers, methamphetamine, cocaine and/or alcohol that can strain the body.

What are the signs of a fentanyl overdose?

An overdose involving fentanyl is similar to any opioid overdose, but it can come on much faster and stronger than a typical opioid overdose.

Overdose signs include: won't wake up or hard to wake up; slow or no breathing, gurgling, gasping or snoring; pale, ashy, cool skin; blue or gray lips or fingernails

How do I respond to a fentanyl overdose?

Call 911. If you are trying to help in an overdose, Washington state's 911 Good Samaritan Overdose Law protects you and the person you are helping from drug possession charges.

Administer naloxone. Naloxone can reverse a fentanyl overdose, although it may take more than one dose.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, March 25). Opioid Overdose: Synthetic Opioid Overdose Data. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/synthetic/index.html>

<https://stopoverdose.org/section/fentanyl/>

<https://lacedandlethal.com/fentanyl-101>

