



Fentanyl Facts for Young Adults

A Big Danger in Small Amounts

What is fentanyl and how does it work in the body?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid, similar to morphine but 50 to 100 times more potent. In its prescription form it is prescribed for pain, but fentanyl is also made illegally and distributed as a street drug. Illegal fentanyl is sold as a powder or made into pills that look like real prescription opioids (pain relievers).

Fentanyl works by binding to the body's opioid receptors, which are found in areas of the brain that control pain and emotions. Its effects include euphoria, drowsiness, nausea, confusion, constipation, sedation, tolerance, addiction, respiratory depression and arrest, unconsciousness, coma, and death.



Counterfeit Xanax
laced with fentanyl



Counterfeit Oxycodone
laced with fentanyl

Why is fentanyl a problem in San Diego?

Fentanyl is the most common substance found in opioid overdose deaths in San Diego – teens as young as 14 years old have overdosed and died.

Illegal fentanyl is being mixed with other drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. This is especially dangerous because people are often unaware that fentanyl has been added. The high potency of fentanyl greatly increases risk of overdose, especially if a person who uses drugs is unaware that a powder or pill contains it. Naloxone is a medicine that can be given to a person to reverse a fentanyl overdose. Multiple naloxone doses might be necessary because of fentanyl's potency.

This amount
is deadly.



What Can You Do?

Only take medication that has been prescribed to you and is in the original packaging. Even if someone offers you a pill and you think you know what type of medication it is, it can be counterfeit if not from a pharmacy. And that is risky, especially so with the increased concerns about fentanyl.

If you've noticed someone in your life showing signs of a mental or substance use disorder, the first thing you should do is talk to them. It's not an easy conversation, but it could be exactly the encouragement they need to seek help. By using one of these conversation starters, you can open the door to a judgment-free zone where they'll feel valued, supported, and listened to.

"I've been worried about you. I've noticed you've (been drinking a lot, taking pills, been using drugs, seemed down lately, etc.). Can we talk about what's going on?"

"If you don't feel comfortable talking to me, is there someone else you'd prefer to talk to, like your parents, siblings or someone else who cares about you?"

"It seems like you are going through a difficult time. Is there anything I can do to help?"

Treatment Works and There is Hope

Medication along with behavioral therapies have been shown to be effective in treating those with an addiction to fentanyl and other opioids.

If you're concerned about someone's opioid or fentanyl use call the **San Diego County's Access and Crisis line (888) 724-7240** for information about treatment and counseling options.

Take Action | Naloxone is medicine that can reverse an overdose. It can be picked up at pharmacies in San Diego without a prescription. Naloxone is easy to administer and can be lifesaving. To find naloxone near you visit sdpdf.org. Always call 911 if there is an overdose. San Diego's Good Samaritan law protects those who call 911 to report an overdose from being charged or prosecuted with a crime, even if they are using drugs at the time they call for help.