

Risks of fentanyl exposure to workers

A worker may come into contact with fentanyl by a needle stick, skin contact, ingestion, inhalation, or contact with mucous membranes, like the eyes or nose. A worker is more likely to come into touch with fentanyl through brief skin contact. Emergency responders have a very minimal chance of being exposed to skin contact in a clinically meaningful way.

If workers use appropriate procedures and universal precautions, they are less likely to be exposed through ingesting, inhalation, or a needlestick.

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 **(800) 222-1222** to speak with the **Washington Poison Center**.

Prevention

Preventing fentanyl overdose involves taking precautions, such as:

- Avoiding all street drugs
- Never take more than the prescribed dose of a medication
- Never mixing drugs
- Talking to your doctor about alternative pain management options
- Having Narcan on hand because it is an emergency treatment for over dose.



Background

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. Employees can take some safety measures to reduce their risk of fentanyl exposure.

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.

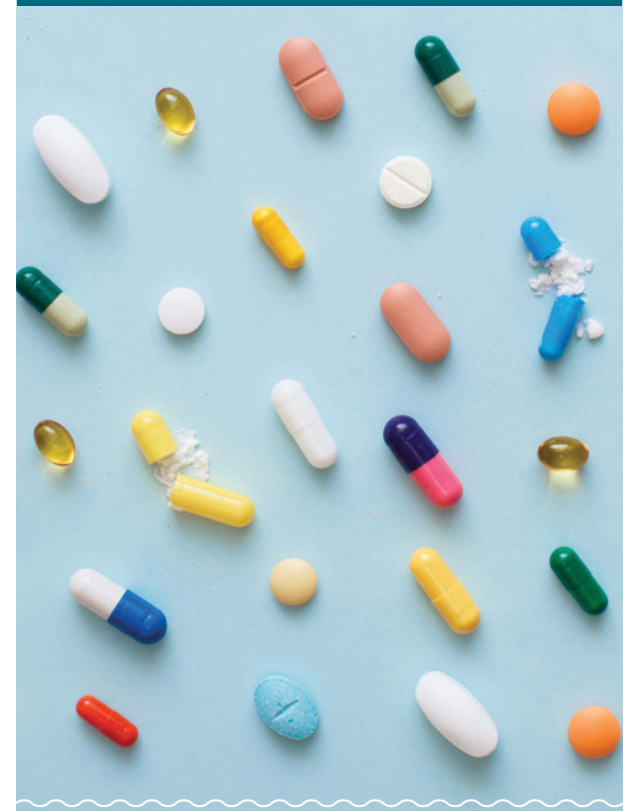
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The Dangers of Fentanyl



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Safety precautions

- Avoid eating, drinking, smoking, or using the bathroom in areas where fentanyl is either known or suspected.
- After handling potentially contaminated surfaces, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.
- To lower the danger of exposure, it is not advised to do field testing with fentanyl or drugs closely similar to fentanyl.
- Avoid doing any testing or handling activities that could cause fentanyl to go airborne, and call for more PPE and qualified staff.
- After a possible fentanyl exposure, and before leaving a scene, wash your hands with soap and water right away.
- Never apply bleach or hand sanitizer to infected skin.



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.

