

Substance Use Prevention Month | *Article*

Fentanyl: A Skyrocketing Threat

The Recent Rise

Though it was once hailed as a “miracle” painkiller when it was first developed in 1960, misuse of fentanyl has seeped into recreational drugs. Without expert dosage, the drug quickly reaches fatal levels. Now, overdoses from fentanyl are rising 2.5 times faster than those from heroin, doubling annually — and outpacing prescription opioid overdoses by an alarming 500 percent. Given that it only takes a consumption of 0.0001 grams of fentanyl to pose a moderate to significant risk of death, the drug has rapidly become one of the most serious threats facing those with substance use disorders.

The Impact on Substance Users

As availability has grown, recreational drug dealers often mix fentanyl with other street drugs to boost the high. This can cause a “hot spot,” or high concentration of fentanyl that has not mixed evenly and contributes to the likelihood of overdose. Men are more likely to use almost all types of illicit drugs, with 25- to 44-year-old men facing the greatest increase in death rates linked to fentanyl. However, as women are equally likely to develop substance use disorders, the drug poses a risk for everyone.

Preventing an Overdose

While the safest way to avoid a fentanyl overdose is to avoid the misuse of illicit drugs, those with substance use disorders face a more difficult challenge in their journey to recovery. If you or someone you know has a substance use disorder, the first step is to connect with critical emergency care or a rehabilitation center. Those who are still using or are around continued substance users should familiarize themselves with fentanyl test strips to detect if the drug has been mixed in with another substance, as well as naloxone in the event of an active overdose.

[#SupportSobriety](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
National Helpline — Dial 1-800-662-4357



Measured at **50–300x** more potent than morphine, and **100x stronger** than heroin, fentanyl is the world’s deadliest opioid. Its threat is both persistent and growing, responsible for **over half** of all overdoses in the U.S.