



HEALTH ADVISORY

DANGERS OF FENTANYL POISONING



The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH's) Food and Drug Branch warns parents and consumers about the potential dangers of the opioid fentanyl. Fentanyl is a drug approved by the US Food and Drug Administration as a pain reliever (analgesic) and anesthetic that also creates euphoric effects. It is 50- and 100-times more potent than other analgesics like heroin and morphine, respectively. In recent years, the number of deaths attributed to fentanyl intake has dramatically increased, especially among adolescents. In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 107,000 deaths due to fentanyl overdose in one year.

Fentanyl is available as injections, pills, or patches. It is typically used to treat severe pain after surgery and for cancer or end-of-life care. Illicit forms of fentanyl are also available and are known by various street names including King Ivory, China Girl, Great Bear, He-Man, Jackpot, Murder 8, Tango & Cash, China Town, Apache, Dance Fever, Friend, and Goodfellas.

Safety concerns with fentanyl

Illicitly manufactured forms of **counterfeit fentanyl**, often smuggled into the US and sold as illegal drugs, are of major public health concern. Heroin, oxycodone, Norco[®], Percocet[®], and Xanax[®] are also often found to be laced with fentanyl, which increases the potency and market value of sold drugs, but consumers are unaware that they are consuming fentanyl. It is easy to be poisoned by fentanyl due to its high potency. The lethal dose of fentanyl is just 2 milligrams per person. Signs of **poisoning or overdose** include stupor, respiratory problems, hypoxia, unconsciousness, coma, and death.

New forms of fentanyl called 'Rainbow Fentanyl', available as brightly colored powders or pills, are an attempt to entice young kids and teenagers. Fentanyl pills have also been found hidden in Lego boxes or disguised as candy in candy boxes labelled as Skittles, Whoppers, or SweetTarts. Fentanyl pills, worth millions, have been entering the US market recently, with the aim to foster addiction. Fentanyl poisoning can be treated with antidotes such as **naloxone or Narcan[®]** to reverse the symptoms and save lives.



Rainbow Fentanyl
Source: npr.org/DEA

CDPH warns about the dangers of fentanyl, and recommends that consumers:

- Not consume any form of fentanyl without consulting their doctor.
- Be aware of new and disguised forms of fentanyl.
- Consult their doctor about alternative ways to manage pain.
- Store prescription opioids in secure and locked locations.
- Dispose of unused opioid medications in safe drop-off locations.
- In cases of poisoning or overdose symptoms, administer **naloxone or Narcan[®]** as soon as possible and call 9-1-1 or the Poison Control hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

Visit the [CDPH](#) and [CDC](#) websites for more information on fentanyl.