

MYTHS VS FACTS

Fentanyl

NIH
HEAL
INITIATIVE

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is about 50x as potent as heroin. Fentanyl and its analogs (like carfentanil, acetylfentanil, and others) are present in the Kentucky drug supply and are responsible for an increasing number of overdose deaths.

HEALing Communities Study
Kentucky

Fentanyl was detected in more than 70% of overdose deaths in Kentucky in 2020.

MYTH

I only need to worry about fentanyl if I am using heroin

FACT

Fentanyl and its analogs are frequently found in many drugs including methamphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy, and benzodiazepines (like Xanax). It can be in the form of a powder or pressed pills.

MYTH

Fentanyl is naloxone resistant

FACT

Naloxone DOES work for fentanyl. Naloxone blocks the effects the same way it does for heroin. It may take more doses than usual and may not last as long, so make sure you CALL 911 for any overdose.

MYTH

People can overdose by touching or inhaling fentanyl by accident

FACT

Despite stories in the news, simply touching or inhaling fentanyl by accident, or touching a person that has overdosed on fentanyl is NOT enough to result in an overdose. Secondhand contact is not a danger to you, so give naloxone to save a life!

MYTH

If using fentanyl, you have to go through more withdrawal before starting buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone)

FACT

It might be more difficult to navigate starting buprenorphine/naloxone, but you can talk about adjusting the starting dose with your provider to ensure a safe start to buprenorphine/naloxone, and minimize the time you're in withdrawal.

MYTH

You can tell if fentanyl is in your drug by looking at it

FACT

It is very difficult to know if what you are using contains fentanyl just by looking at it, tasting it, or smelling it. Fentanyl test strips can help you find out if what you are using may have fentanyl or fentanyl analogs in it, but they are not always accurate. It is always safest to assume fentanyl may be present.

Resources

<https://harmreduction.org/issues/fentanyl/>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl>

<https://odcp.ky.gov/stop-overdoses/Pages/default.aspx>

<https://kiprc.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2021-07/Fentanyl%20Test%20Strips%20%5BTraining%5D.pdf>