

# Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic prescription opioid pain reliever that is 50 to 100 times more powerful than morphine. Even a tiny amount of fentanyl added to an opioid or heroin can be deadly. Due to fentanyl's potency, it gives users a more intense high and is therefore more sought out than other opioids. This means a huge revenue boost for dealers, since users will want more of the drug more often.

- Fentanyl is cheaper than heroin, making it far easier for drug traffickers to manufacture and sell, often without the user's knowledge
- Much of the fentanyl in the United States is manufactured in labs in China and Mexico and sold online or transported across US borders
- Fentanyl can be laced into heroin and other drugs or sold as a standalone drug



## OPIOIDS AND FENTANYL

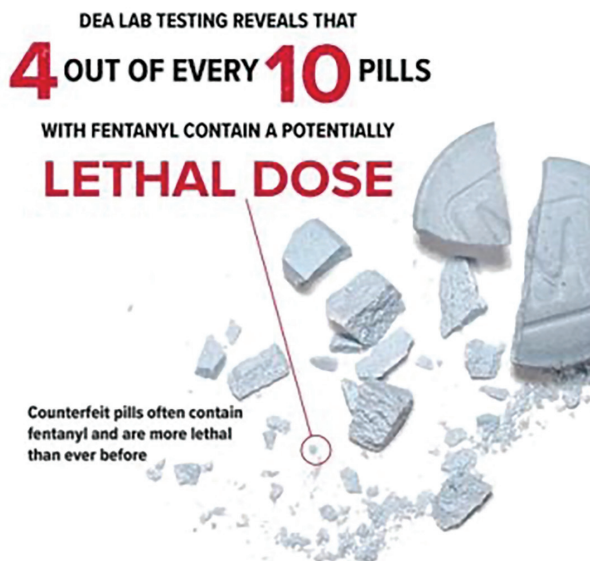
Opioids and the opioid crisis are mentioned a lot in the news today. As a class, opioids include prescription painkillers like OxyContin and oxycodone, Vicodin, and hydrocodone, as well as codeine and morphine. Heroin and synthetic opiates include fentanyl, carfentanil, and acetyl-fentanyl. Opioids boost dopamine levels in the brain, causing euphoria and relaxation. Use of these drugs also includes side effects such as drowsiness, depression, nausea, confusion, respiratory problems, unconsciousness, coma, and even death. Tolerance and physical dependence on these drugs can result in withdrawal if drug use stops, compounding the effects of the drug.

## STREET DRUGS AND LABORATORIES

As quickly as the DEA schedules fentanyl as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, chemists in clandestine labs around the world tweak the chemical structure from fentanyl to an analog very similar to fentanyl. This new chemical structure is a “new drug” and is different than fentanyl, so it avoids current regulations and laws, leaving government with the challenge of keeping up with illicit drug use and production. These clandestine labs continuously monitor DEA schedules. As various synthetic drug structures are controlled, they change to a chemical compound, similar to the regulated drug, but now it is not regulated by the DEA.

This complicates drug testing as well, because labs are having to develop new tests in order to detect all known versions of the drug. As of June 2016, there were 22 known fentanyl analogs, with more being created every day. Currently, Averahealth can test for 16 different fentanyl analogs, including carfentanil.

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