Fentanyl: The Latest Opioid Trend

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WHAT IS FENTANYL?
America’s deadliest drug in
SHASTA COUNTY
What is Fentanyl?

• **Legal Use:** Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid (pain killer) that is similar to morphine but **up to 100 times more potent.**

• **Illegal Use:** Because of fentanyl’s powerful properties and affordability, it’s being diverted for illegal use. As a street drug, it was recently reintroduced into the illicit U.S. drug supply in 2013-2014.

• Fentanyl is sold illegally in many forms:
  - Powder
  - Dropped onto blotter paper
  - Eye droppers and nasal sprays
  - Pills that look like other prescription opioids
  - Mixed in with other drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and meth

*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse*
Fentanyl Facts

- Unlike other drugs such as cocaine, marijuana and opium, fentanyl is not limited by the production of plants, farmers or weather. As such, some drug sellers are making the switch to fentanyl production.

Two primary production areas:

- China supplies precursor chemicals and finished product to North America (Canada, U.S. and Mexico)
- Mexico manufactures fentanyl in secret labs

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse
What does fentanyl do, and why is it addictive?

Fentanyl binds to the body's opioid receptors, which are found in areas of the brain that control pain and emotions.

After taking opioids many times, the brain adapts to the drug, diminishing its sensitivity, making it hard to feel pleasure from anything besides the drug. When people become addicted, drug-seeking behavior and drug use take over their lives.
The Dangers of This Invisible Drug

100x
stronger than morphine\(^1\)

50x
stronger than heroin\(^6\)

2
salt-sized grains of fentanyl can be fatal\(^9\)

1.4x
greater chance of dying by an opioid overdose than in a car crash\(^2\)

560%
increase in opioid overdoses since 2015 primarily due to the increase of fentanyl in Illinois\(^6\)

Source: A Dose of Truth at https://www.prevention.org/a-dose-of-truth/what-is-fentanyl/
Why is fentanyl so dangerous?

Fentanyl is impossible to see, smell or taste. No one can tell you if your pill or powder is laced.

It’s difficult to mix evenly, so no hit, bump or pill has the same amount.

Other drugs are often cut or laced with Fentanyl because it’s cheaper to produce, it increases potency and sellers can make bigger profits. This is especially risky when people don’t realize their drugs contain fentanyl. Many users buy their regular drug of choice and don’t realize they are purchasing fentanyl. This often results in new addictions and overdose.

In 2019-2020, most deaths involving cocaine also involved fentanyl.

Source: DEA Philadelphia Field Division

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## Shasta County deaths involving fentanyl

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FENTANYL Alone (3 in 2020, 1 in 2021)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with METHAMPHETAMINE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with COCAINE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with other OPIOIDS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with MDMA (ECSTASY)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with MARIJUANA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with ALCOHOL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with MITRAGYNINE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Individual deaths may be included in more than one category (i.e. fentanyl and meth and cocaine).

“Some people are seeking out fentanyl, but others are unaware that their drugs are laced or cut with it. It goes without saying, but you can’t trust your local drug dealer.”

~Lt. Brian Cole, Redding Police Department

Source: Shasta County Data
PRESENCE OF FENTANYL IN SHASTA COUNTY
The Redding Police Department (RPD) is seeing an increase in fentanyl-related emergencies and arrests. Police witness fentanyl overdoses often, and call fentanyl “the next generation of drug use in Redding.”

- Officers are trained to use Narcan®. They carry it in their gear bags or on their person in case of exposure.
- In 2020, there were 7 deaths due to fentanyl. By April 2021, 5 deaths had already been reported.

RPD projects 15 or more deaths due to fentanyl by the end of 2021.
# Drug Overdose Deaths 2016-2021 YTD (4/14/2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fentanyl</th>
<th>Unspecified Opioid/Narcotic</th>
<th>Unspecified other drug/multiple</th>
<th>Methamphetamines/amphetamines</th>
<th>Heroin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021YTD*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 deaths with fentanyl specifically listed on the death certificate.

*Source: Shasta County Data*
This graph shows a significant increase in 3-year average mortality occurring from 0.67/year during 2016-2018 to 4.00/year during 2018-2020.

In first quarter of 2021, Shasta County has already seen 5 deaths from drug poisoning involving fentanyl. This is the same number of deaths seen in all of 2019. If this pace continues, the projection shows Shasta County may see nearly three times the number of deaths from fentanyl when compared to 2020. *Data from 2020 is still preliminary.*

Source: Shasta County Data
HOW HAS SHASTA COUNTY FOUGHT OPIOID USE BEFORE FENTANYL?
The misuse of prescription pain medications containing opioids is a rapidly changing, multi-faceted public health crisis that leads to addiction, overdose and death.

To address the crisis, Shasta County has participated in the following efforts:

- NoRxAbuse Coalition
- Safe Medicine Disposal Program
- Think Again Shasta Campaign
Prevention Efforts: NoRxAbuse

The NoRxAbuse Coalition leads a unified effort to prevent and reduce opioid addiction and overdoses in Shasta County. The Coalition provides tools to healthcare professionals and increases public awareness. This includes working with doctors and pharmacists on safe prescribing. The coalition also focuses on alternative pain management, overdose prevention, addiction treatment and proper disposal.
Through the **Safe Medicine Disposal Program** (RxSafeShasta.com), **6,063 lbs** of unused prescription drugs were safely collected at kiosks located throughout the county in 2020.

**FACTOID**
More than **53%** of people who misuse prescription pain medications say they got them from a friend or family, often getting them easily within the home.
Prevention Efforts: Think Again Shasta

The Health and Human Services Agency launched Think Again Shasta. This is an educational campaign to ensure parents know about the risks of prescription drug abuse among youth. Students who abuse prescription drugs say they get their drugs for free—just by visiting their parents’ medicine cabinet.

The program advises parents to lock medication in a safe location, safely dispose of unused drugs and talk with children about drug abuse.
Positive Outcomes

Through community efforts, Shasta County saw numerous positive outcomes between 2017 and 2019:

- Opioid prescribing rate dropped 30 percent
- Prescription of buprenorphine (a medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction) rose 76 percent
- Opioid-related deaths dropped 25 percent

Source: California Opioid Overdose Surveillance Dashboard
Percent of phone calls to the California Poison Control System involving opioids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Calls for Opioids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021 YTD</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Poison Control System
Shasta County’s multifaceted effort to attack opioid abuse showed significant success – and then the problem took a turn.
Fentanyl: Actions to prevent overdose?

Shasta County Syringe Services Program provides:

- Overdose prevention strategies, including the importance of not using alone
- Training on how to recognize and prevent an overdose
- Test strips to identify the presence of fentanyl in unregulated injectable drugs, powders and pills.
- Narcan® to participants. (Police also use Narcan in situations where mere seconds make the difference between life and death for accidental overdoses, children, exposed law enforcement and police canine.).
Fentanyl is in our drug supply. What now?

Local campaigns can boost public awareness. Here are few examples from other jurisdictions:

King County, Washington *Laced & Lethal campaign (lacedandlethal.com):*

- A website with key info about the risks of fentanyl, and ways to prevent overdose and death.

- A social media campaign to reach youth, with info on how to recognize and respond to overdose.

- A downloadable toolkit of overdose prevention materials and guide for community partners that serve youth.
Illinois State: A Dose of Truth campaign (prevention.org/a-dose-of-truth):

- A website with base knowledge for the general population about opioids, including Fentanyl.
Each person’s experience with MAR is different because you can choose a treatment that works best for your life. Explore the reasons below to see why MAR is scientifically the best option for overcoming opioids.

MAR Allows You To

- **Balance Priorities**
- **Be There For Your Family**
- **Escape Unhealthy Cycles**
- **Stay Alive**
- **Have A Second Chance**

Illinois Department of Human Services, *Rethink Recovery* campaign ([rethinkrecoveryil.com](http://rethinkrecoveryil.com)):

- A website promoting Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR), which is customizable, with multiple medications and treatments plans.
Tennessee District Attorney’s General, Fentanyl: The Deadliest High campaign (thedeadliesthigh.com):

• District Attorneys traveled across the state to conduct 15 in-person focus groups and spoke to over 160 middle and high school students. Their voices and feedback were the primary inspiration for the direction and content of this campaign, which includes web, social media and grassroots efforts.
San Diego, Health & Human Services
(www.livewellsd.org)

FENTANYL
IS HERE AND KILLING SAN DIEGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

Fentanyl can be found in ANY pill you buy on the street... or in cocaine and meth... and can kill you instantly.

For information and recovery options call:
San Diego County Access and Crisis Line:
1-888-724-7240 free assistance 24/7.

New York City, Department of Health
The Chicago Recovery Alliance (website),
Fentanyl Awareness Campaign

Alberta Health Alliance (www.drugsfool.ca)

**USING DRUGS?**

Fentanyl, a drug much stronger than heroin, is being mixed into cocaine, crack, Xanax, MDMA, heroin, and other street-bought drugs, causing a spike in drug overdose deaths.

**FENTANYL IS NEARLY UNDETECTABLE.**

Fentanyl may be in the drugs you are using, buying, or selling.

**SAFETY TIPS:**

- **Use with others.** If you overdose, it's important to have someone around to help.
- **Carry Naloxone/Narcan®,** a medication that can reverse an overdose involving heroin, fentanyl, or other pain relievers. Have it on hand and tell others how to use it. It could save your life.
- **Test your drugs before using.** With fentanyl test strips to detect the presence of fentanyl.
- **Start low and go slow.** Use a small amount first to see how you feel before using more ("tasting" the drug).
- **Watch and wait** before using more.

**Find out how to access Naloxone, Fentanyl Test Strips, Care, or Support:**
Visit Live4Lali.org and click Request an Appointment, call 844.584.5254, or email info@Live4Lali.org.
Visit anypositivechange.org or email info@anypositivechange.org.
Discussion:

• Pros and cons of each campaign
  • Look and feel
  • Messaging
  • Target Audience
  • Motivate safer behaviors through realistic calls to action