



OverdoseLifeline

Facts about Fentanyl

- In 2019, over 70% of overdoses involved opioids, and 73% of opioid overdose deaths involved synthetic opioids like fentanyl (1). Provisional 2020 data suggests that both of these rates are increasing (2)
- Fentanyl is being mixed with opioids, like heroin and pressed pills, as well as cocaine, MDMA, and methamphetamines to increase their potency due to its low cost
- Fentanyl is addictive, and is 80-100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin (3, 4)
- Because of fentanyl's high potency, there is an increased risk of overdose when using substances that contain fentanyl
 - One kilogram of fentanyl has the potential to kill 500,000 people (3)
 - Over 25% of tablets tested for fentanyl by the DEA contained a lethal dose (3)
- Most people consume fentanyl without knowing, causing people to use substances in their typical amount and leading to accidental overdose

What can be done to prevent harm from fentanyl?

- Because fentanyl is an opioid, fentanyl overdoses can be reversed by naloxone. Multiple doses may be required due the high potency of fentanyl
 - However, since people often don't know that they are consuming fentanyl and because it can be found in non-opioid substances, many may not know to try naloxone in the event of an overdose
- Fentanyl test strips are an evidence-based approach to preventing overdose deaths, but are not widely available or used (5, 6, 7)

Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS)

- Fentanyl test strips (FTS) are easy to use and inexpensive ~ around \$1 per strip (7)
- FTS allows a person using drugs to test their batch for traces of fentanyl
- People who inject drugs with a positive FTW had 5 times the odds of reporting changes in drug use behavior (8)
- Receiving a positive FTS result is significantly associated a positive change in overdose prevention behaviors such as (5, 6, 7):
 - Using less of a batch with fentanyl or using a different, fentanyl-free batch
 - Change the way they are consuming the drug
 - Using in the presence of others
 - Giving FTS to others they suspect may have a similar batch
 - Ensuring that naloxone is present to reverse opioid overdose

Sources:

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7. Appel, G., Farmer, B., & Avery, J. (2021, June 2). *Fentanyl Test Strips Empower People and Save Lives- So Why Aren't They More Widespread?* Health Affairs. DOI:10.1377/hblog20210601.974263
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How to Use Fentanyl Test Strips

Knowing how to properly use fentanyl test strips is the first step in reducing harm and preventing potential overdose deaths. To use test strips:

1. Add sterile water to your empty baggie or to the cooker you just prepped and mix well.
 - a. If you are injecting, first prepare your shot. Then, add 10 drops of water to your cooker and stir. Only test your rinse water!
 - b. If you are snorting, add 10 drops of water into your empty baggie and mix well.
 - c. If you are using pills, crush one pill in an empty baggie, dump out the power, add 10 drops of water to the baggie, and mix well.
2. Hold the blue top of the strip and dip the test strip into the water up to the first blue line. Hold in the water for 15 seconds, and then take it out.
3. Place the test strip on a sterile surface or across the top of the cooker. Wait 1-2 minutes for results to show up.
 - a. One red line= POSITIVE. If you see one red line in the middle of your test, this means that fentanyl is present in your batch.
 - b. Two red lines= NEGATIVE. If you see two red lines in the middle of the test (even if the second line is faint), this means that fentanyl was not detected in your batch.
4. If you have a positive test result, make sure to use in the presence of another person and have naloxone on hand in case of an overdose.

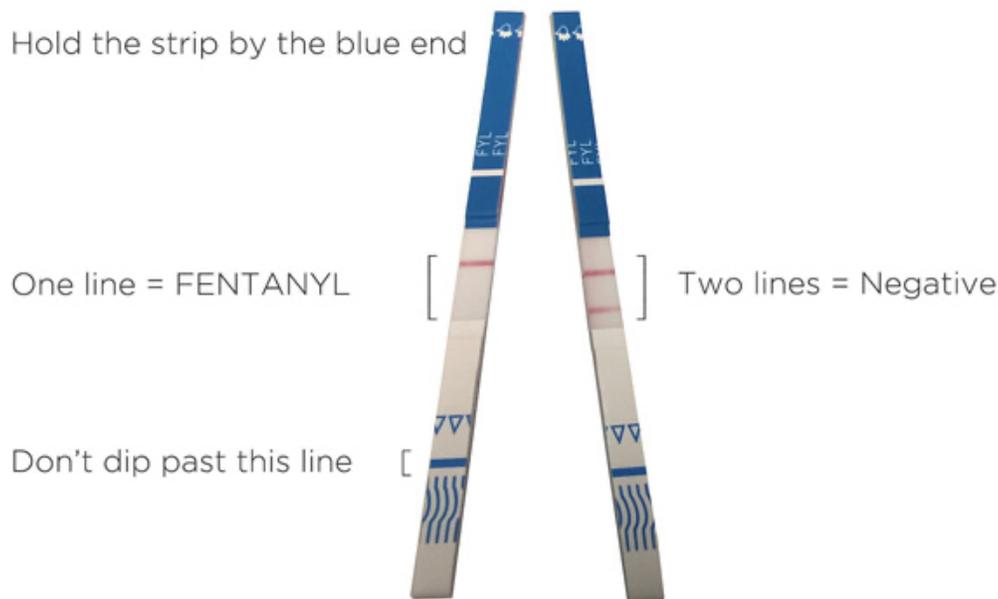


Image source: APLA Health (n.d.)

Sources:

1. Prevent Overdose RI (n.d.). *Fentanyl Test Strips*. <https://preventoverdoseri.org/fentanyl-test-strips/>. Accessed June 30, 2021.
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