

FACT OR FICTION

"FENTANYL LACED MARIJUANA"

** The information gathered on this sheet solely pertains to cannabis flower, NOT vape cartridges, edibles, resins, oils, or other processed forms of cannabis. **

Fiction: Fentanyl-laced marijuana is causing widespread fatalities.

Fact: Fentanyl is being found in almost every illicit drug being sold. But, according to Lawrence Weinstein, MD, Chief Medical Officer at American Addiction Centers, "There is no scientific data that would validate the assumption that fentanyl-laced marijuana is causing widespread fatalities thus far." 1 This is due to a multitude of factors. For one, fentanyl burns at a much lower temperature than marijuana. Even if there was fentanyl in the marijuana supply, the fentanyl would burn out way before it could be ingested in the body.2 As Claire Zagorski, a paramedic and harm reductionist with a background in chemistry states, "In the case of cannabis flower, smoking involves loading the material into a pipe or roll paper, lighting it on fire, and inhaling the smoke. Burning fentanyl with flame destroys it, so even if someone smoked cannabis contaminated with fentanyl, the fentanyl would not be active in the smoke."3 Findings from a study backed by the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command support the assertion that fentanyl is degraded by temperature.4 Secondly, putting fentanyl in marijuana is not economically profitable. Fentanyl is more expensive and can be sold by the microgram while marijuana is cheaper and goes by the pound. Illicit market marijuana sells anywhere from \$5 - \$30 a gram in most states while a pure gram of fentanyl is worth up to \$200.2 Therefore, dealers get no benefit from mixing fentanyl in a marijuana supply to sell.

Fiction: Testing positive for fentanyl and marijuana means that you used adulterated marijuana

Fact: The likelihood of cannabis being laced with fentanyl is very low, although there is a small chance of cross contamination.5 This "cross contamination" could be caused, for example, by fentanyl residue being left on the same surface where the marijuana was handled on. Even so, fentanyl burns at a much lower temperature than marijuana and would burn out before you ingested the marijuana into your body.2 The fire used to burn the marijuana plant and create the marijuana smoke would destroy the fentanyl before consumption. As Harm Reduction Ohio states, "Marijuana is not like smoking most other drugs in which fumes are consumed. When you smoke cannabis, you actually consume smoke."6 Additionally, THC can be detected in someone's body for many days after ingestion due to the THC binding to the fat tissues in the body.7 If someone who died from a fentanyl overdose tested positive for THC post-mortem, it is most likely that the drugs were used separately, but the THC was still lingering in the body.

Fiction: K2 (spice) is the same as marijuana.

Fact: K2 has been often mislabeled as "synthetic marijuana," which leads consumers to believe that when they are buying K2, they are buying marijuana. K2, although visually similar to marijuana, does not have the same chemical properties of marijuana derived from the cannabis plant. Unlike real cannabis, ingesting K2 can cause an array of health problems such as seizures, psychosis, kidney damage, or death.2 The belief that a consumer is using marijuana, when it is really K2, has led many to believe illicit marijuana is being laced.

Fiction: You should be concerned that marijuana is being laced with fentanyl.

Fact: There is no substantiated evidence to support the claims that marijuana is being laced with fentanyl or that fentanyl laced marijuana is causing wide-spread overdose deaths in the United States.

Information up to date as of: October 2022

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