

# Fentanyl Fact Sheet

Learn how to prevent overdoses, and respond with Narcan® if an overdose happens

## What is Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. There is a greater risk for overdose because of fentanyl's high potency.

Non-prescribed fentanyl is being sold in counterfeit pressed pills, marketed as Norco®, Percocet®, Xanax®, and Oxycontin®.

Fentanyl is also being sold as heroin in a powder form. It has been found in methamphetamines, cocaine, and even illicit cannabis.

## State and Local Trends



California is one of 16 states with a greater than 50% increase in fatal overdoses involving synthetic opioids\*.

In Santa Cruz County, fatal overdoses from fentanyl almost quadrupled from 5 in 2019 to 19 in 2020\*\*.

## Safety Tips

**Be wary** of counterfeit pills.

**Assume** that all non-prescribed substances contain fentanyl.

**Test your drugs** for fentanyl using fentanyl test strips.

**Never use alone** (friends can save your life!).

**Always have Narcan®** (naloxone) in case of an overdose.

**Start low and go slow** (watch and wait before using more).

**Avoid Dangerous Combinations.** Fentanyl is especially dangerous when mixed with benzos, such as Xanax and Klonopin.

Mixing fentanyl unknowingly with other opiates, such as heroin, Vicodin, Oxycontin, or even alcohol can lead to an overdose very quickly.

## Fentanyl Test Strips

Using fentanyl test strips is one of the most effective ways to reduce risk if you plan on using substances.

**You can get fentanyl test strips from:**

### Santa Cruz County Syringe Services Program



**North County:**  
1066 Emeline Ave., Room 105,  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(Please use north entrance of Bldg F)

- Mon. and Fri., 10:00am-1:00pm
- Tues., 5:00-7:00pm
- Wed. and Thurs., 4:00-6:00pm



**South County:**  
1430 Freedom Blvd., Suite D,  
Watsonville, CA 95076

(Please use side entrance on Crestview Dr. and ring doorbell)

- Mon., Wed., and Thurs., 3:30-4:30pm
- Tues. and Wed., 10:30-11:30am

### Harm Reduction Coalition of Santa Cruz County



Call or text 831-769-4700 for mobile delivery

### Testing strips are not 100% accurate.

Fentanyl isn't always equally distributed throughout the substance. This means a test strip could come back negative, even if fentanyl is in another part of the drug - especially solids. Additionally, test strips may not detect certain types of fentanyl analogs.

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## How to Recognize an Overdose and Respond

Knowing the signs of an opioid overdose can save a life. They include the acronym **PS CHUG**:

- P** Pale or discolored fingernails, lips, or skin
- S** Slow/Shallow/Stopped breathing
- C** Cold/Clammy Skin
- H** Heartbeat has become very slow or stops
- U** Unconscious / Unresponsive (limp, unable to wake up or speak)
- G** Gurgling, Vomiting, Choking

**Acting quickly is crucial.**

**If you think someone is overdosing:**

- **Call 911 immediately.** (California's Good Samaritan Law protects you and the person you're calling for from legal liability.)
- **Administer Narcan® / naloxone** if available.
- **Lay the person on their side** to prevent choking.
- **Start the process of rescue breathing and CPR.** [tinyurl.com/narcanhow](https://tinyurl.com/narcanhow)
- **Stay with the person** until Emergency Medical Services arrive.

## What is Narcan®, Where to Get It, and How to Use It

Narcan® is a medication used to reverse the life-threatening symptoms of an opioid overdose.

It does this by temporarily knocking opioids off their receptors in the brain. Once there are no opioids in the brain, the individual will be able to breathe again.

If someone is not experiencing an opioid overdose, you cannot hurt them with Narcan®.

## Resources

**Never Use Alone:** <https://neverusealone.com/>

**Submitting drugs at a lab for testing**  
[https://www.drugsdata.org/send\\_sample.php](https://www.drugsdata.org/send_sample.php)

**More about fentanyl, safety, and testing**  
<https://harmreduction.org/issues/fentanyl/>

Narcan® is available through:

- **The Santa Cruz County Syringe Services Program**  
[www.santacruzhealth.org/SSP](http://www.santacruzhealth.org/SSP)
- **The Harm Reduction Coalition of Santa Cruz County**  
Call or text the hotline at (831) 769-4700
- **Janus of Santa Cruz County**  
(866) 526-8772
- **Dominican Hospital**

And many other community agencies

### Sources

\*Health Alert Network Advisory:  
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2020/han00438.asp>

\*\*May 2021 Santa Cruz Coroner Data