

Rainbow Fentanyl

A dangerous new version of a drug has become popular on the street. Rainbow fentanyl is a brightly colored powdered version of the toxic opioid that is extremely addictive and deadly.

This new concoction is also available in multi-colored fentanyl pills that look like SweetTarts. The pills come in a variety of bright colors, shapes, and sizes potentially making them more attractive to children and young people.



The Drug Enforcement Administration has been warning the public about this new street drug version of fentanyl because it so often resembles candy. Employees who

are parents need to be aware of this new fentanyl form because of the serious risks to children. The goal of this *Employee Education Newsletter* is to raise awareness of this issue in order to decrease the number of lives impacted by hundreds of daily fatal overdoses.

The “word on the street” and on social media claims that certain colors of rainbow fentanyl are stronger or weaker than others, but there is no indication through DEA’s laboratory testing that this is true. Every color, shape and size of these pills should be considered extremely dangerous.

More than 150 people die every day from overdoses related to fentanyl. The drug is one hundred times more potent than morphine and fifty times stronger than heroin. Drug-involved overdose deaths, including illicit drugs and prescription opioids, are among the most serious problems facing our families, communities, and workplaces.

Why do People use Fentanyl?

Fentanyl may be prescribed by a doctor to treat extreme pain after surgery or to help with chronic pain management conditions like advanced-stage cancer. It can be a highly addictive drug, so it is usually only prescribed to patients who do not receive a therapeutic response from other painkillers. Medical professionals know that fentanyl should never be used for short-term pain due to it being so addictive.

Where does Fentanyl Come From?

China is the primary source of illicit fentanyl, and there are thousands of labs making pure fentanyl as well as the source of ingredients or precursors needed to manufacture the drug. Drug dealers make fentanyl in the form of fake pills as a marketing tactic. They mix fentanyl with other ingredients to manufacture a cheaper substance, often creating an even more deadly drug. The strong potency of fentanyl along with the combination of other substances can quickly result in an accidental overdose and unexpected death.

Even in very small doses, these drug combinations can be deadly. An added challenge is that there are many chemical variations of fentanyl, commonly referred to as analogues. There are about 30 known fentanyl analogues, but currently, only 19 of these analogues are controlled substances under Federal law.

Fentanyl comes in many forms, including powder, pills, capsules, liquid, a nasal spray, skin patches, or sometimes as a lollipop or tablet that dissolves like a cough drop. It is difficult to differentiate powdered fentanyl from other substances; therefore, it can be ingested unknowingly if mixed with other drugs, to include cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and meth. Mixing drugs is never safe because the effects from combining drugs are more unrecognizable and unpredictable than use of an individual drug.

The Fentanyl Crisis

Fentanyl abuse has developed into a full-blown crisis in our country, and this crisis

is exceptionally dangerous because of fentanyl's high potency and the speed with which it reaches the brain. Just two milligrams of the drug can kill, whether swallowed, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin.

Those suffering from an overdose involving fentanyl may require both higher doses and multiple administrations of naloxone to reverse the overdose and to become stabilized. Even the police and first responders are at risk from inadvertently touching or inhaling fentanyl powder at a crime scene or while helping an overdose victim.

Combating the Problem

Fentanyl is the deadliest drug threat facing America. An overwhelming percentage of drug overdose deaths that occur daily are a result of synthetic opioids like fentanyl. It is important then for employees to be on the lookout for fentanyl, to include the newer trend of rainbow-colored fentanyl, and to understand its highly toxic and deadly nature.

The increase in fentanyl overdose deaths nationwide highlights the need to expand

1. drug-free workplace programs,
2. overdose prevention information and education,
3. availability of substance use treatment, and
4. awareness of effective overdose response methods.

For more information, visit the CDC Fentanyl information page: <https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/basics/fentanyl.html>