

Baltimore

& the Overdose Epidemic

The opioid epidemic is one of the greatest public health crises of our time.

- Baltimore is in the midst of an opioid overdose epidemic.
- Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid increasingly found in heroin and other drugs.
- Even small amounts of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues can cause overdose and death.

Fentanyl accounted for **75%** of overdose deaths in Baltimore in 2017.

In Baltimore, there were **573** fentanyl overdose deaths in 2017, more than **5** times as many as 2015.

Experiences with Fentanyl

We recently surveyed 175 people who use drugs in Baltimore city.

Over **half**

have had an opioid overdose

90%

believe fentanyl caused their overdose

80%

are concerned about fentanyl

88%

wished they knew whether their drugs contained fentanyl ¹

70%

did not prefer drugs containing fentanyl

85%

were concerned about fentanyl in heroin ²

20%

were concerned about fentanyl in cocaine ²

10%

were concerned about fentanyl in street opioid "pain killer" pills ²

The vast majority of people surveyed said that knowing whether fentanyl was in their drugs would help them guard against overdose.

¹Among people who perceived that their drugs were contaminated with fentanyl

²Among people who were concerned about the presence of fentanyl in their drugs

About Drug Checking

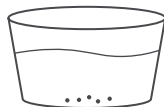
In our survey of 175 people who use drugs in Baltimore city, 88% said that they would use fentanyl test strips.

- Fentanyl test strips would allow people to know whether their drugs contain fentanyl (or a related substance) and make informed decisions to avoid overdosing such as:
 - Using with someone else around
 - Carrying naloxone and making sure they know how to use it
 - Doing a “tester” shot
 - Using less than originally intended
 - Throwing the drugs away
- Fentanyl test strips are cheap (\$1 per strip), accurate, easy to use, and work similarly to pregnancy test strips
 - Only 1 out of 50 tests will say drugs contain fentanyl when they really don't
 - Only 1 out of 50 tests will miss the presence of fentanyl
 - If you're unsure, just check again
- Fentanyl test strips can detect tiny amounts of fentanyl, less than one microgram (a grain of table salt)
- Fentanyl test strips can also recognize related substances such as acetyl fentanyl, furanyl fentanyl and carfentanil

Basics of fentanyl test strips

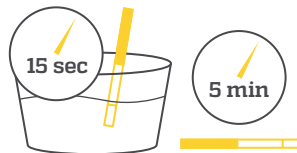
Step 1:

Dissolve a few grains of the drug in a clean container (such as a cooker or cup)



Step 2:

Dip the strip to the blue line for 15 seconds, lay the strip flat to dry for 5 minutes



Step 3:

Read the strip – one line means the test detected fentanyl, two lines means the test did not detect fentanyl



Remember, this doesn't mean that the drugs are safe. Even if the result is negative, the test is not 100% accurate. If you test a pill, rock, or powder, you might test a portion that does not contain fentanyl. Or the drugs could contain another toxic contaminant.



Actual Representation

More information on the FORECAST study is available at americanhealth.jhu.edu/fentanyl

To learn more:

- The Baltimore City Health Department (health.baltimorecity.gov/Fentanyl/)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/fentanyl.html)
- Bmore POWER (www.bmorepower.org/)
- Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (baltimoreharmreduction.org/)

References:

- Sherman, S.G., Park, J.N., Glick, J., McKenzie, M., Morales, K., Christensen, T., Green, T.C. (2018) FORECAST Study Summary Report. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.