

The Real Deal on Fentanyl

Dear Educator,

Overdose deaths in young people ages 10-19 **doubled** from 2019 to 2021, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The leading cause of these deaths is a synthetic opioid called **fentanyl**, which can be lethal in very small doses. Fentanyl is increasingly showing up in illicit drugs and counterfeit pills, putting young people at risk of overdose. In 2020 alone, fentanyl was a factor in 76% of drug deaths of people ages 14-23.

To help counteract this threat, it is critical that teens, families, and educators understand the dangers of fentanyl and what they can do to prevent overdose deaths. The Ad Council and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) have teamed up with Young Minds Inspired to share *The Real Deal on Fentanyl*, to help inform students about this deadly drug and empower the members of your community to protect themselves through overdose prevention education.

Please share this program with other teachers at your school and your school nurse. And please share your opinion of the program by visiting ymiclassroom.com/feedback-realdeal.

Sincerely,
Dominic Kinsley, PhD
Editor in Chief, Young Minds Inspired

Target Audience

Grades 9-12

Concepts & Skills

- Raise awareness and dispel myths about fentanyl
- Empower students to make safe, healthy decisions
- Provide overdose prevention tips
- Reading informational text
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Communication

Program Components

- This teacher's guide
- Three reproducible student activity sheets
- A classroom wall poster
- A reply card for your feedback

Additional resources available at ymiclassroom.com/realdeal:

- Spanish-language versions of the student activities
- A reproducible letter for parents and caregivers (in English and Spanish)
- An education standards chart
- An online feedback form

How to Use This Program

Speak with your administration to clarify any relevant policies, including on naloxone and student privacy related to discussing sensitive topics. Photocopy and distribute the activity sheets and display the poster. When done, have students take home the completed activities with the letter for caregivers. You might also email the letter to families or share it online.

Note: Talking about fentanyl is important, but it can be uncomfortable. Present students with facts and be cautious to steer away from language that is dehumanizing or promotes stereotypes. (See <https://nida.nih.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction> for guidance.) Consider the sensitivity of families who may have experienced loss related to fentanyl or substance use and let students know they may speak with a guidance counselor at any time. Acknowledge that this might be tough or even scary to talk about and encourage students to ask questions and help them find reliable, valid sources of information.

Activity 1 What Is Fentanyl?

Begin by taking a poll to see how many students have heard of fentanyl. Then have students work in pairs or small groups to complete the quiz using the information at realdealonfentanyl.com. Review the answers with the class and share the clarifying details below to dispel any misperceptions.

Answers: **1.** T; **2.** F, opioids have a high risk of addiction; **3.** T; **4.** T; **5.** T; **6.** F, 2mg is a lethal dose, which is equivalent to a few grains of sand or salt; **7.** F, fentanyl is odorless and tasteless; **8.** F, counterfeit pills can look identical to real medications; **9.** T; **10.** F, fentanyl clumps, so one pill may be deadly even if others from the same batch aren't; **11.** F, you should not share medication, even if you think it's from a doctor. Pills may change hands many times if being sold outside of a pharmacy, so your friend can't know what's in them. That's a real danger with counterfeit pills.

Activity 2 What Does This Mean?

Have students research the answers to the questions on the activity sheets and then reconvene to discuss the answers below and any questions students have.

Answers: Part 1: **1.** fentanyl; **2.** pills, counterfeit; **3.** lethal; **4.** gamble; **5.** drugs, one.

- Part 2:** **1.** tiny pupils; limp body; unable to talk; pale, gray, or bluish skin, lips, nails; cold or clammy skin; breathing very slow or stopped; extremely sleepy or passing out; snoring, choking or gurgling sounds. **2.** Call 911 immediately, tell them someone is unresponsive; administer naloxone if you have it; try to keep the person awake and breathing; if the person is not breathing, do rescue breathing or CPR if you know it; lay the person on their side to prevent choking; stay with them until emergency services arrive and tell them what you know about the situation. **3.** Opioid overdose reversal medications such as naloxone and nalmefene block the effects of opioids, like fentanyl, in the body. **4.** Most states have a Good Samaritan law to protect individuals from being charged or prosecuted for possessing or using drugs when they are assisting emergency services in the case of an overdose. **5.** See <https://pdaps.org/datasets/good-samaritan-overdose-laws-1501695153> for Good Samaritan laws by state.

To learn about naloxone and other opioid overdose reversal medications, visit realdealonfentanyl.com/reverse-an-overdose.

Activity 3 What Can I Do?

For this activity, consider inviting the school nurse or a first responder to speak with students about naloxone. Have students work in small groups to read the FAQs in Part 1 and explore the listed websites to answer any additional questions they have about opioid overdose reversal medications. Invite students to share and discuss their answers to Parts 2 and 3.

Answers: Part 2: Answers will vary and might include: prevention (only take medicine prescribed by their doctor and filled at a licensed pharmacy); harm-reduction (never leave someone alone if they've taken drugs and consider carrying naloxone), and building healthy coping habits. **Part 3:** Answers will vary.

Resources

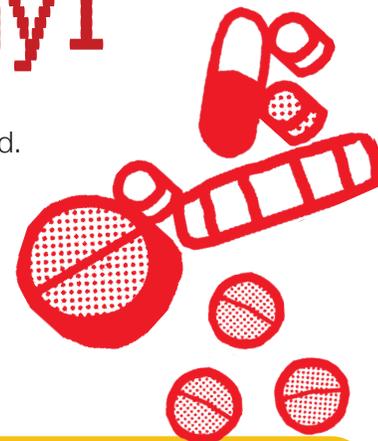
- realdealonfentanyl.com
- neverusealone.com
- harmreduction.org
- ymiclassroom.com/realdeal



The Real Deal on Fentanyl

Parents and Caregivers,

The U.S. is facing an overdose crisis caused by fentanyl — a powerful synthetic opioid. In school, your child has been learning about the risks of fentanyl and reversing an opioid overdose with a program from the Ad Council, in partnership with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and educational specialists at Young Minds Inspired. This handout features information about fentanyl to help you talk with your child about the crisis and help keep your family safe.



What is fentanyl?

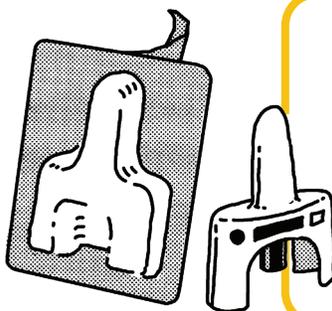
- Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.
- It is cheap to produce and used to manufacture illicit drugs.
- It may be found in fake pills that look like real medication.

How can we reduce the risks?

- Make sure your children know to only take pills prescribed by a doctor and filled at a pharmacy, and not to take pills from a friend even if they say that they're real.
- Know the signs of an overdose: tiny pupils; limp body; inability to talk; cold or clammy skin; breathing is very slow or has stopped; extremely sleepy or passing out; snoring, choking, or gurgling sounds; pale, gray, or bluish skin.
- Be prepared to take action in the event of an overdose.
- Carry naloxone.

Why is fentanyl a concern?

- Overdose deaths among people ages 10-19 doubled from 2019 to 2021. 84% of these overdoses involved fentanyl.
- 2 milligrams of fentanyl is considered a potentially lethal amount — that's about the size of a few grains of sand or salt.
- You can't see, smell, or taste if a drug contains fentanyl.
- Many kids do not use fentanyl on purpose. They buy counterfeit pills online or get them from friends they trust to help them study or cope with stress or depressed feelings without knowing that they're fake versions of prescription pills and may contain fentanyl.



What is naloxone?

- Naloxone is a fast-acting medication that can reverse an opioid overdose.
- It's safe, legal, and available without a prescription in all 50 states.
- Learn more at dropthebomb.com/reverse-an-overdose.

How can I help my child?

- Talk with your child about the risks of fentanyl.
- Encourage them to speak with you or another trusted adult if they're struggling with emotions or are concerned about a friend.
- Discuss naloxone. Even if you feel that drugs and counterfeit pills are not something your family has to worry about, remember that you or your child could potentially save someone's life as a bystander by carrying naloxone.

Learn more

Check out realdealonfentanyl.com with your child and dropthebomb.com (for parents) to learn more about fentanyl and talking to your child about it.

