

Talking to Parents and Youth About Fentanyl

FENTANYL IN LA COUNTY

In Los Angeles County, overdose deaths among teenagers doubled from 2019 to 2020 (during the covid pandemic), and in 2021, fentanyl was identified in about 77% of adolescent overdose deaths nationally. We are experiencing the worst overdose crisis in Los Angeles County history. Recent local tragedies include three Los Angeles County youth had overdosed from MDMA that had been contaminated with fentanyl in May 2022. On September 13, 2022, a 15-year-old Bernstein HS student was found dead on campus in Hollywood after ingesting a pill containing fentanyl. There have been at least other 7 reported overdoses of other Los Angeles County youth.

Fentanyl can now be found within counterfeit pills and other illicit drug within Los Angeles County and the presence of fentanyl is causing an increased rate of overdose and death. The landscape of overdose deaths no longer primarily among those who are using regularly. Due to fentanyl, we are seeing people overdose and die the first time they try an illicit substance or counterfeit pill.

Conversations can save lives.

What to say to youth about fentanyl and overdoses:

- 1) Anyone who uses illicit substances (such as cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA (ecstasy), or heroin), counterfeit pills (purchased from online or in-person dealers such as, oxycodone, morphine, or sedatives like Xanax), or who obtains medication that is not prescribed to them and picked up from a pharmacy is at risk for an overdose.
- 2) Fentanyl is being found in many illicit substances and counterfeit pills. Drug dealers do not consistently know what is in the pills they are selling.
- 3) If you are going to experiment with substances:
 - a. Have Naloxone (Narcan) with you.
 - b. Do not use alone (Having someone who can monitor for an overdose and administer Naloxone (Narcan)) or calling [NeverUseAlone](#) at 1-800-484-3731.
 - c. Test substances for fentanyl with a fentanyl testing strip, which can be purchased online through [BTNX](#), [Dose Test](#), [Dance Safe](#), [Wisebatch](#), or [TACO](#).
 - d. Do not purchase substances from unknown sources.
- 4) Please reach out for help to your counselor, pediatrician, therapist, parents if you want to use substances.

How parents can talk to their children about fentanyl and drugs:

1. Have open and honest conversations about drugs with your kids early and often.
2. Be clear about your expectations.
 - a. Saying “be smart” may mean something different to you than it does to your child. Being direct by saying something like “I expect that you will not drink and drive or use illicit substances” is clearer.
3. Use age-appropriate language and contexts to help them understand what illicit drugs can do.
 - a. For elementary school kids: Discussing that you don’t take anyone else’s medication and that you only take medication when it is prescribed by your doctor or approved by your parents.
 - b. For teens: Try asking questions about what they know about substances and let them share with you. Provide accurate information if they ask questions and be honest when you don’t know something and seek out resources together. Avoid trying to lecture them.
4. Create a safe, nonjudgmental space.
5. Always listen to what they know and answer their questions as honestly as you can.
6. Ask for help when you need it.
7. Additional guidance for parents and families is available [here](#) and [here](#).

Visit www.RecoverLA.org for more information.

