FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

What every parent needs to know about fentanyl.

Fentanyl has changed the risks our children face, from teens to toddlers. Here's what to know, what to watch for, and how to start talking.

10	76%	1 in 4	133
High school students die from fentanyl in an average week.[1]	Of teen overdose deaths in 2023 involved fentanyl.[2]	Teen overdose deaths showed signs of fake pills.[3]	Babies and toddlers under 5 died of fentanyl poisoning in 2021.[4]

TEENS AND FAKE PILLS

Why are more teens dying?

Teen drug use hasn't gone up. The drugs changed. A pill that looks like Xanax, Percocet or Adderall can now contain fentanyl. Trying one pill can now be deadly.[5]

Which teens are at risk?

Any teen, including honor students and athletes. Stress, anxiety, poor sleep or a sports injury can lead a teen to look for a pill. About 4 in 10 teens who died had signs of a mental health condition or treatment.[3]

How do I start the conversation?

Start early, stay calm and keep it going. Ask what they've heard. Tell them they can always call you for a ride, with no questions asked that night.[7]

Where do teens get these pills?

Often through social media and messaging apps. Sometimes from friends who don't know what's in them.[6]

What signs should I watch for?

Changes in sleep, mood, friends or grades. Secrecy about their phone. Unexplained cash. Loose pills, burned foil or cut straws. A sign isn't proof, so start with a calm talk.[7]

THE BOTTOM LINE

Tell your kids: no pill is safe unless a pharmacist gave it to you with your name on it.

YOUNG CHILDREN AND YOUR HOME

How are babies and toddlers exposed?

Usually at home. A dropped pill or a trace of powder can be enough. In one national study, 3 in 5 poisoning deaths of children 5 and under happened in the child's own home.[8]

What are the signs a child was exposed?

Very sleepy or hard to wake. Slow breathing. Tiny pupils. A limp body. Blue or gray lips. Call 911 right away. Naloxone is safe for children.[9]

Will my child get in trouble for calling 911?

All 50 states and D.C. have Good Samaritan laws that offer some protection to people who call for help. Make sure your teen knows: always call.[11]

How do I keep young children safe?

Lock up every medicine. Keep guests' bags and coats out of reach. Check floors after visitors leave. Know who is caring for your child.[9]

Should we keep naloxone at home?

Yes. Keep it where a teen or babysitter can find it, and show everyone how to use it. It's sold over the counter at most pharmacies.[10]

TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN

1. **Ask, don't lecture**
   Try: "What have you heard about fake pills?"
2. **Give one clear rule**
   Never take a pill from anyone but a pharmacist or doctor.
3. **Talk about social media**
   Agree on what to do if a dealer reaches out.
4. **Make an exit plan**
   Pick a code word they can text to get picked up, no questions asked.
5. **Keep talking**
   Many short talks work better than one big one.

GET HELP

EMERGENCY
911

POISON HELP
1-800-222-1222

SAMHSA HELPLINE
1-800-662-4357

FIND TREATMENT
FindTreatment.gov

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE
Call or text 988

Fentanyl Families Network
For families who have lost a loved one. Scan to join.

About us. United Against Fentanyl is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that interrupts the use of illicit fentanyl through innovative, bold, and effective initiatives. Learn more at unitedagainstfentanyl.org.

SOURCES

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6. U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, fake pill public awareness campaign, dea.gov/onepill.
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8. Gaw C, et al. Study of 731 poisoning deaths of children 5 and under, 2005 to 2018. Journal of Pediatrics, 2023.
9. American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org guidance on opioid poisoning and naloxone in children.
10. U.S. Food and Drug Administration, approval of Narcan 4 mg naloxone nasal spray for over-the-counter use, Mar. 29, 2023.
11. Harm Reduction Legal Project, 50-state survey of overdose Good Samaritan laws, current as of Dec. 31, 2025.

For education only. Not medical or legal advice. In an emergency, call 911. Updated November 2026.