**Child Protective Investigations**

**What is Fentanyl?**

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid. It can be produced pharmaceutically or illegally made. It works by binding to opioid receptors. It is an incredibly potent and strong drug. Fentanyl is s 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. It is highly addictive.

**How is Fentanyl used?**

Ingest (take a pill), snort, smoke, or inject Fentanyl. There are also non-traditional methods of Fentanyl use such as blotter paper, eye drops, nasal sprays, lozenges, and patches.

**Why people use Fentanyl?**

Fentanyl is a pain reliever which can also produce a euphoric high in large doses.

**Physical Signs of Recent Use:**

Flushed skin, euphoric rush, slowed heart rate (after initial rush), slow or irregular breathing, drowsiness or nodding off during conversations or falling asleep without warning, slurred or incoherent speech, clouded thinking, small pupils, watery eyes, itching skin, increased sleeping, hyperactivity, drowsy and/or relaxed body or heavy limbs.

**Length of High/Intoxication**

How long a fentanyl high lasts depends on how much the person took, their tolerance to the drug, its half-life, how it’s used, and other factors. When injected intravenously, fentanyl high may last between 11 to 22 hours. If a person uses the patch or lozenge version of fentanyl, the effects may last up to 36 hours after use.

**Length of Detection in DFPS Drug Tests**

As a person’s body breaks down Fentanyl, it leaves traces behind called metabolites. Fentanyl drug testing is not included on the standard drug panel for urine or hair by DFPS. It can be added as a specialty test. Metabolites may stay in your system longer than the duration of Fentanyl effects, meaning the drug may be detected in drug tests much longer than the high lasts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Detection Timeframes for Fentanyl by Specimen Source for DFPS Drug Testing** | |
| **Urine** | **Up to 72 hours** |
| **Hair** | **Up to 3 months** |

**Fentanyl Exposure Risk / Safety Considerations**

A person cannot overdose on fentanyl by touching a doorknob or dollar bill. Illicit fentanyl cannot be absorbed through the skin or by touching an item or surface where it is present.  When in powder form, fentanyl and its analogs **cannot be absorbed through the skin**.  Dissolving the powder in a liquid does not change this property.  Wet objects do not pose an increased risk for an overdose caused by casual exposure.  Fentanyl cannot penetrate the skin on its own. Although [ingesting a pinch of fentanyl powder](https://www.statnews.com/2016/09/29/fentanyl-heroin-photo-fatal-doses/) can be fatal, contact with intact skin is extremely unlikely to cause opioid toxicity, which can occur only if the substance enters the bloodstream.

* For a Fentanyl overdose to occur, the powder must enter the bloodstream and get to the brain.
* Fentanyl can also enter the bloodstream through open cuts or wounds on the skin.

Fentanyl Inhalation

The possibility of accidental inhalation presents a higher risk, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. It would take prolonged exposure to a large amount of airborne fentanyl to cause an overdose, so there is very little to no risk for an everyday person being exposed to secondhand opioid smoke.

Fentanyl Smoking

When someone smokes fentanyl, most of the drug has been filtered out by the user before there is secondhand smoke. Fentanyl smoke doesn’t just sort of float around. Studies looking at fentanyl fumes have found that it does not linger in the air for very long.

**Cross-Contamination or Fentanyl in Other Drugs**

Powdered Fentanyl looks just like many other drugs. The presence of Fentanyl in other drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, has led to a rise in accidental overdoses. Users may be unaware that their pills or other substances have Fentanyl in them, increasing the risk of overdose and death. This is particularly concerning because even small amounts of Fentanyl can be lethal, especially for individuals with no previous exposure or tolerance to opioids. Also, Fentanyl clumps together, so it’s not evenly distributed from one pill to another or within a batch of substances. For example: If someone has four pills, one can be fatal even if the others are not.

**Overdose Symptoms**

Symptoms of opioid overdose include pinpoint pupils, falling asleep or losing consciousness, slow and shallow breathing, choking or gurgling sounds, limp body, and pale, blue, or cold skin.

**DFPS Drug Testing Costs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fentanyl Testing Cost Per Test 1 | |
| Urine Testing | $34.00 |
| Hair Strand Drug Test | $350 |

1 This cost is in addition to original drug testing cost.

Since September 2022, the Department has purchased 178 drug testing with Fentanyl (including urine and hair strand drug test). Sixty-one (61 or 34% have been paid out of Region 02).

**Hair Growth of Children vs. Adults**

Age is the number one factor that can affect hair growth rates. Hair growth is faster between ages 15 and 30, before slowing down. There is also the widest variance in growth prior to age 15. Babies lose all the hair they were born with within six months and after that, it can grow into different textures and/or colors.

Within CPI and CPS, there are Substance Use Specialist who are available to assist you with resources and education. If needed, an in-person meeting or training can be scheduled to assist anyone needing more information on Fentanyl, drug testing, or substances. An email [SubstanceAbuseSpecialist@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:SubstanceAbuseSpecialist@dfps.texas.gov)