

Fentanyl Awareness and Overdose Prevention

In 2020, synthetic opioids were responsible for over 56,000 deaths in the United States (CDC, 2022). Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths are on the rise with the increase in synthetic opioid deaths. With the rise of fentanyl-laced drugs in the Los Angeles community, it's crucial to understand what fentanyl is, signs of an overdose, and how you can treat it.



What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a synthetic opiate that is normally used to treat patients who suffer from severe pain. It is considered to be 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin and morphine. Normally, fentanyl comes in pill, powder, or liquid form and is often laced with other drugs. Fentanyl-laced drugs are fatal and it's nearly impossible to tell without the use of test strips. (CDC, 2016).



What are the signs of overdose?

- Limp body
 - Small, pinpoint pupils
 - Pale, cold, clammy skin
 - Choking or gurgling sounds
 - Loss of consciousness
- (Mosel, 2022) (CDC, 2021)



What to do if you suspect an overdose



- Call 911 immediately
- Administer naloxone
- Keep person awake and breathing
- Lay person on side to prevent choking
- Remain with person until emergency personnel arrive



What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a life-saving medication used to reverse an opioid overdose. It is normally used in either a nasal spray or injectable form. Naloxone can restore breathing in 2 to 3 minutes, even if a patient's breath has stopped. When administered, stay with the person until help arrives, or at least 4 hours to ensure breathing has returned to normal (CDC, 2022).