Checking for Fentanyl in Your Drugs Using Fentanyl Test Strips

Always Test | Never Use Alone | Carry Narcan

As the presence of fentanyl, a strong, fast acting opioid has increased in the illicit drug supply, individuals may wish to test all or a portion of their drugs prior to use. General guidance for the testing of drugs varies based on the type of drug and/or the mode of administration. Please see below for more information on how to best use fentanyl test strips.

Limitations of Fentanyl Test Strips

- Test strips do not indicate the amount of a substance, just the presence or absence of fentanyl.
- Test strips detect fentanyl and many fentanyl analogues. Fentanyl analogues are slight alterations of the original drug. There are some analogues, and more being created, that the test strips may not detect.
- False positives may be common with MDMA or methamphetamine. This can be prevented by diluting the drug in larger amounts of water. However, there is not a consensus on how much water to use, so safer practice is recommended. See Risk Reduction section.
- A negative result does not mean that the drug is safe to use.
- When unsure or unable to test a drug, assume that fentanyl is present and ensure someone is around who can recognize and respond to an opioid overdose with Narcan.

Test All of Your Drugs (Best Practice)

- When fentanyl is mixed with other drugs, it is never mixed evenly. This means that a portion of your drug may not contain fentanyl, while another portion may. This is called the "chocolate chip cookie effect" with the cookie representing all of the drug, and the chocolate chips representing fentanyl. This is why it is best to test everything you intend to consume.

- The best way to ensure accurate results is by testing all of your drugs. This requires dissolving your entire dose in water. For drugs consumed orally, you can simply drink the water after testing. For drugs like cocaine or meth that people snort, you can get the powder back. Follow instructions for regaining your drugs here.

Test a Portion of Your Drugs (Alternative Method)

- Due to patterns of drug use, testing all of your drugs may not be realistic for many. Below is information on how to test a portion of your drugs. The basic steps include crushing up a portion of your drug and diluting it with water, ensuring vigorous mixing and stirring.
This will help distribute any fentanyl that might be concentrated in one spot. There is no guarantee, but this increases the likelihood of test strips detecting fentanyl. See below for how to test based on drug type.

**Reading Results**
- 1 red line = fentanyl detected
- 2 red lines = no fentanyl detected

*There is still a risk of overdose even if fentanyl is not detected on the test*

**Testing Pills or Powder (that are NOT MDMA or methamphetamine)**
1. Put at least 10 milligrams (the size of a match stick head) of your drug in a shot glass sized cup or small container. If using a drug baggie, remove drugs and use drug residue inside the baggie.
   - For pills, crush or break in half and scrape the middle
   - For powder or shards, crush up into as fine a powder as possible
2. Add around 1/2 teaspoon of water into container
3. Stir thoroughly
4. Holding the blue end, dip the test strip in the mixture, up to the wavy lines, and hold for 10 seconds. Remove.
5. Place on a flat surface for 2 minutes
6. Read results (1 line = positive, 2 lines = negative)

**Testing MDMA or Methamphetamine**

Current guidance mentions the need to strongly dilute the residue for MDMA or methamphetamine. False positives may occur, but can be avoided by adding more water than other drugs need, from a tablespoon up to a half a cup of water.
1. Follow steps 1-5 for “Testing Pills or Powder”, yet for step 2, fill the shot glass to the top with water, or add up to a half cup of water in your container.
2. Read results (1 line = positive, 2 lines = negative)
Testing Heroin or Other Injectables
1. Prepare your drugs as you would typically
2. Leave several drops in container to test
3. Follow steps 2-4 for “Testing Pills or Powder”
4. Read results (1 line= positive, 2 lines= negative)

Risk Reduction
If fentanyl is present, there are some steps that can be taken to reduce risk of overdose.
1. Go slow and take small amounts
2. Call 911 if you suspect an overdose
3. Let someone know if your drugs tested positive for fentanyl and be ready to respond in case of an overdose
4. Do not use alone. If you do not have someone with you, utilize a service like neverusealone.com
5. Download OpiRescue App
6. Always carry naloxone and ensure someone you are with has it on hand
7. Avoid mixing drugs
8. Encourage others to test their drugs and use harm reduction strategies