



Naval Criminal Investigative Service  
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**NCIS Warns Department of the Navy Personnel about the Dangers of Fentanyl**

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service, in partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration, warns all Department of the Navy personnel and their families about the increasing lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine. These counterfeit pills are easy to purchase, widely available, and often contain deadly doses of fentanyl, all of which pose a significant threat to our safety and our national security.

Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in pain relief and as an anesthetic. Fentanyl is a Schedule II narcotic under the United States Controlled Substances Act of 1970. There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical and illicitly manufactured. Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain, especially after surgery. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is distributed through illegal means and has a heroin-like effect. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, making the drugs cheaper, more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous.

Fentanyl dominates the illicit opioid supply because of its potency. It is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine. It provides a high similar to that of heroin, but way stronger. It has been found in all 50 states, and is easily obtainable via social media and e-commerce platforms. Fentanyl can be sold alone, but illegal narcotics manufacturers often add it to their products because its high potency allows dealers to traffic smaller quantities while maintaining the drug effects their buyers expect.

Pharmaceutical fentanyl comes in many forms, including oral “lollipops,” effervescent tablets, oral drops and sprays, nasal sprays, patches, and injections. Legitimate fentanyl is obtained from diversion and theft from pharmacies, or abusing/sharing legitimate prescriptions.

Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is found in three main forms: liquid, powdered and pill form. Liquid fentanyl is added to nasal sprays and eye drops, or dropped onto paper, similar to LSD. Powdered fentanyl looks like many other drugs, and is commonly mixed with heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. Fentanyl is often pressed into pills resembling common prescription opioids, such as Percocet and oxycodone. It is often extremely difficult to distinguish the counterfeit pills from the authentic pills.

Fentanyl is addictive and its extreme potency makes it extremely easy to overdose. When a user overdoses on fentanyl, their breathing can slow or stop, decreasing the flow of oxygen to the brain. This is a condition known as hypoxia, and it can lead to coma, brain damage, and death.

It can take as little as two milligrams of fentanyl to cause an overdose. In 2022, the DEA seized over 20,000,000 pills containing fentanyl. Of the pills seized, 40 percent (8,000,000) contained at least two milligrams of fentanyl—a potentially lethal dose. It is possible, and common, for someone to take a pill or a narcotic without even knowing it contains fentanyl.



### *Signs of a Fentanyl Overdose*

- Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold, clammy, and/or discolored skin

### *How to Respond to a Suspected Overdose*

- Call 911 immediately.
- Administer naloxone if available.
- Try to keep the victim awake and breathing.
- Lay the victim on their side.
- Stay with the victim until emergency workers arrive.

NCIS is a federal law enforcement agency that investigates felony crime, prevents terrorism, and protects secrets for the U.S. Department of the Navy. NCIS employs approximately 2,000 personnel, including 1,000 federal special agents, in 41 countries and 191 locations around the world.

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