

# Secondhand Fentanyl Exposure

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Fentanyl is an opioid typically used for anesthesia and pain management. It is also sold illicitly outside of the clinical environment. Fentanyl is available as pills and powder and may also be found in other illicit drugs.

## What is secondhand exposure?

Secondhand exposure to fentanyl refers to:

- Smoke exhaled by someone smoking fentanyl
- Secondhand smoke residue
- Pills or powder

It is extremely unlikely you will overdose by being near or helping someone who has used fentanyl. To date, there have been **no clinically confirmed cases** of first responders or law enforcement overdosing from inhaling, touching, or being in the vicinity of it.

When smoked, fentanyl absorbs quickly into the lungs. Exhaled air may have extremely low traces of fentanyl, but these disperse immediately in the air. Fentanyl does not absorb well through the skin so you are unlikely to experience overdose.

## What to do if you think you have been exposed to fentanyl

- If you touch an unknown substance, **wash off the residue with soap and water.** (Hand sanitizer will not work.)
- **Do not touch your face**, especially your eyes, mouth, and nose until you have washed your hands.
- If you see powder or a crushed pill, do not touch it or attempt to remove it. Do not do anything that might cause powder to get into the air, such as open a window.
- If you need to handle an **unknown** substance or powder for clean up or an emergency scenario, wear nitrile gloves and an N95 mask.

If you see someone who might be experiencing an overdose, **it is safe to help them by calling 911 and administering naloxone and starting CPR.** Naloxone works to reverse opioid overdoses, including fentanyl overdoses and can be used in the case of a suspected overdose, even if you are not sure of the cause.

[Find naloxone](#)

[How to respond to an overdose](#)

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## Quick Facts

- Second-hand exposure to any opioid, including fentanyl smoke, poses almost zero overdose risk.
- Fentanyl does not absorb well through skin.
- If you happen to touch powdered Fentanyl, avoid touching your face. Wash your hands with soap and water if you have touched any unknown powder.