

## Why the Increase in Heroin Overdose Deaths?

- Higher purity heroin in certain cities cause abusers to accidentally overdose.
- Increase in new heroin initiates many of whom are young and inexperienced.
- The rate of heroin initiation among people with a history of nonmedical use of opioid pain relievers was approximately 19 times greater than those with no history of non-medical use.
- Illicitly manufactured drugs vary in purity, dosage amounts, and adulterants.

Source: Muhuri PK, Gfroerer JC, Davies MC. Associations of nonmedical pain reliever use and initiation of heroin use in the United States. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality; 2013.

- Abuse of heroin, fentanyl, acetyl fentanyl, fentanyl analogues and prescription opioids may lead to overdose, respiratory depression and death.

## Recognizing Heroin/Fentanyl/Acetyl-Fentanyl/Opioid Overdoses:

- Awake but unable to talk or loss of consciousness.
- Fingernails and/or lips turning a purple or blueish color.
- Breathing and/or pulse is shallow, erratic or absent.
- Choking sounds or snore-like gurgling sounds signifying difficulty breathing.



Fentanyl (Clandestinely produced)

To report a possible violation of controlled substances laws and regulations, go to:

[www.DEA.gov/ops/submit.php](http://www.DEA.gov/ops/submit.php)

or contact your local DEA office.

For further information about drugs and drug abuse, please visit DEA's websites:



Scan to view the websites.



[www.justthinktwice.com](http://www.justthinktwice.com)



[www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com](http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com)

United States Department of Justice  
Drug Enforcement Administration  
Demand Reduction Section



What You Should Know About

**HEROIN** with  
fentanyl, acetyl fentanyl  
and other fentanyl  
analogues



[www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

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## Heroin

**Heroin** is a highly addictive illegal opioid drug that can lead to an overdose, respiratory depression (reduced ability to breathe), coma, or death. Heroin is typically injected but may also be ingested by either snorting or smoking. The risk of overdose and death increases when heroin is adulterated with fentanyl, acetyl fentanyl or another fentanyl analogue.

As heroin use, abuse, and dependence have increased, so have heroin-related overdose deaths. Between 2002 and 2013, the rate of heroin-related overdose deaths nearly quadrupled. Heroin use has more than doubled among young adults, ages 18-25, in the past decade and 45% of people who used heroin were also addicted to prescription opioid painkillers. Source: Centers for Disease Control (CDC) July 2015.

## What Is Fentanyl?

**Fentanyl** is a Schedule II narcotic used as an analgesic and anesthetic and is typically prescribed to treat severe or chronic pain. It is the most potent opioid available for use in medical treatment – 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine and fentanyl is 30 to 50 times more potent than heroin. Its euphoric effects are indistinguishable from morphine or heroin.

**WARNING:** Ingestion of very small doses of fentanyl can be fatal. Fentanyl can be absorbed through the skin and accidental inhalation of airborne powder may also occur.

## Illicit Uses of Fentanyl

**Fentanyl** is abused for its intense euphoric effects. Fentanyl can serve as substitute for heroin in opioid dependent individuals; however, fentanyl is a very dangerous substitute because it is much more potent.

Recently, the United States has seen an increase in clandestinely manufactured fentanyl that is mixed with heroin or being sold as a heroin substitute. Multi-kilogram quantities of clandestinely manufactured fentanyl at the wholesale level as well as packaged for retail distribution---in a similar fashion as heroin---have been seized.

Additionally, while less common, fentanyl can also be diverted via pharmacy theft, fraudulent prescriptions, and illicit distribution by patients and registrants (physicians and pharmacists). Theft has also been identified at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

### Some recent examples of the fentanyl surge across the United States

New Jersey saw a huge spike in fentanyl deaths in 2014, reporting as many as 80 in the first six months of the fiscal year.

Rhode Island and Pennsylvania have also seen huge increases since 2013. In a 15-month period, about 200 deaths were reported in Pennsylvania related to fentanyl.

In the St. Louis area, based on information provided by medical examiners over a 10-year period, fentanyl was the only drug attributed as a primary death factor in 44 percent of fentanyl-related overdose cases.

The other 56 percent involved fentanyl and other substances such as alcohol, pharmaceuticals, cocaine or heroin.

Source:

<http://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2015/hq031815.shtml>.

## Acetyl Fentanyl

**Acetyl fentanyl** is a potent opioid analgesic and has recently been linked to a number of overdose deaths in the United States. Acetyl fentanyl and fentanyl are closely related in chemical structure and activity. Acetyl fentanyl is generally not part of most illicit drug screens and may remain undetected in drug abusers. Acetyl fentanyl may serve as a substitute for heroin in opioid dependent individuals.

### Control Status of Acetyl Fentanyl

On July 17, 2015, the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration issued a final order to temporarily schedule the synthetic opioid, N-(1-phenethylpiperidin-4-yl)-N-phenylacetamide (acetyl fentanyl), and its optical, positional, and geometric isomers, salts and salts of isomers, into Schedule I pursuant to the temporary scheduling provisions of the Controlled Substances Act.

States Affected by Fentanyl Overdose Incidents and Deaths, 2013-2014

