The Real Deal on Fentanyl

Dear Educator.

Overdose deaths in young people ages 10-19 doubled from 2019 to 2021, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The leading cause of these deaths is a synthetic opioid called fentanyl, which can be lethal in very small doses. Fentanyl is increasingly showing up in illicit drugs and counterfeit pills, putting young people at risk of overdose. In 2020 alone, fentanyl was a factor in 76% of drug deaths of people ages 14-23.

To help counteract this threat, it is critical that teens, families, and educators understand the dangers of fentanyl and what they can do to prevent overdose deaths. The Ad Council and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) have teamed up with Young Minds Inspired to share The Real Deal on Fentanyl, to help inform students about this deadly drug and empower the members of your community to protect themselves through overdose prevention education.

Please share this program with other teachers at your school and your school nurse. And please share your opinion of the program by visiting ymiclassroom.com/ feedback-realdeal.

Sincerely, Dominic Kinsley, PhD Editor in Chief, Young Minds Inspired

Target Audience

Grades 9-12

Concepts & Skills

- Raise awareness and dispel myths about fentanyl
- Empower students to make safe, healthy decisions
- Provide overdose prevention tips

Program Components

- This teacher's guide
- Three reproducible student activity sheets
- A classroom wall poster
- A reply card for your feedback

Additional resources available at vmiclassroom.com/realdeal:

- Spanish-language versions of the student activities
- A reproducible letter for parents and caregivers (in English and Spanish)
- An education standards chart
- An online feedback form

How to Use This Program

Speak with your administration to clarify any relevant policies, including on naloxone and student privacy related to discussing sensitive topics. Photocopy and distribute the activity sheets and display the poster. When done, have students take home the completed activities with the letter for caregivers. You might also email the letter to families or share it online.

Note: Talking about fentanyl is important, but it can be uncomfortable. Present students with facts and be cautious to steer away from language that is dehumanizing or promotes stereotypes. (See https://nida.nih.gov/ nidamed-medical-health-professionals/ health-professions-education/wordsmatter-terms-to-use-avoid-whentalking-about-addiction for guidance.) Consider the sensitivity of families who may have experienced loss related to fentanyl or substance use and let students know they may speak with a guidance counselor at any time. Acknowledge that this might be tough or even scary to talk about and encourage students to ask guestions and help them find reliable, valid sources of information.

Activity 1 What Is Fentanyl?

Begin by taking a poll to see how many students have heard of fentanyl. Then have students work in pairs or small groups to complete the guiz using the information at realdealonfentanyl.com. Review the answers with the class and share the clarifying details below to dispel any misperceptions.

Answers: 1. T; 2. F, opioids have a high risk of addiction; 3. T; 4. T; 5. T; 6. F, 2mg is a lethal dose, which is equivalent to a few grains of sand or salt; 7. F, fentanyl is odorless and tasteless; 8. F, counterfeit pills can look identical to real medications; 9. T; 10. F, fentanyl clumps, so one pill may be deadly even if others from the same batch aren't; 11. F, you should not share medication, even if you think it's from a doctor. Pills may change hands many times if being sold outside of a pharmacy, so your friend can't know what's in them. That's a real danger with counterfeit pills.

Activity 2 What Does This Mean?

Have students research the answers to the questions on the activity sheets and then reconvene to discuss the answers below and any questions students have.

Answers: Part 1: 1. fentanyl; 2. pills,

counterfeit; 3. lethal; 4. gamble; 5. drugs, one.

Part 2: 1. tiny pupils; limp body; unable to talk; pale, gray, or bluish skin, lips, nails; cold or clammy skin; breathing very slow or stopped; extremely sleepy or passing out; snoring, choking or gurgling sounds.

2. Call 911 immediately, tell them someone is unresponsive; administer naloxone if you have it; try to keep the person awake and breathing; if the person is not breathing, do rescue breathing or CPR if you know it; lay the person on their side to prevent choking; stay with them until emergency services arrive and tell them what you know about the situation. 3. Opioid overdose reversal medications such as naloxone and nalmefene block the effects of opioids, like fentanyl, in the body. 4. Most states have a Good Samaritan law

to protect individuals from being charged or prosecuted for possessing or using drugs when they are assisting emergency services in the case of an overdose.

5. See https://pdaps.org/datasets/goodsamaritan-overdose-laws-1501695153 for Good Samaritan laws by state.

To learn about naloxone and other opioid overdose reversal medications, visit realdealonfentanyl.com/reverse-anoverdose.

Activity 3 What Can I Do?

For this activity, consider inviting the school nurse or a first responder to speak with students about naloxone. Have students work in small groups to read the FAQs in Part 1 and explore the listed websites to answer any additional questions they have about opioid overdose reversal medications. Invite students to share and discuss their answers to Parts 2 and 3.

Answers: Part 2: Answers will vary and might include: prevention (only take medicine prescribed by their doctor and filled at a licensed pharmacy); harm-reduction (never leave someone alone if they've taken drugs and consider carrying naloxone), and building healthy coping habits. Part 3: Answers will vary.

Resources

- realdealonfentanyl.com
- neverusealone.com
- harmreduction.org
- ymiclassroom.com/realdeal





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- Reading informational text Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Communication



Fentanyl is a dangerous synthetic opioid drug that's being manufactured illegally and is often found in illicit drugs and counterfeit prescription pills. It is a main reason why drug overdose deaths in people ages 10-19 **doubled** from 2019 to 2021, with 84% of these deaths involving fentanyl.

To learn more, explore **realdealonfentanyl.com**. Use the information you learn to determine if each statement below is true or false. Circle the correct answer.

Statement	True or False?
1. Opioids are a class of drugs that include oxycodone, morphine, and heroin.	True / False
2. Opioids have a low risk of addiction.	True / False
3. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is sometimes prescribed for severe pain, in controlled circumstances with a doctor's supervision.	True / False
4. Illegal fentanyl — made in unregulated facilities with no controls — is used to manufacture illicit drugs because it is cheap to produce and very powerful.	True / False
5. Fentanyl may be mixed into illegal drugs like heroin, MDMA, and cocaine, or used to make counterfeit pills that look like those prescribed for pain (OxyContin), ADHD (Adderall), and anxiety (Xanax).	True / False
6. You have to take a lot of fentanyl to overdose.	True / False
7. Fentanyl has an unusual smell and taste, making it fairly easy to detect in powder form.	True / False
8. You can identify counterfeit pills if you know what types of markings to look for.	True / False
9. Naloxone and nalmefene are over-the-counter medications that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.	True / False
10. If someone has already taken counterfeit pills from a particular batch without overdosing, then the rest of the batch will be safe, too.	True / False
11. Sharing medication with a friend is safe if you know them well.	True / False







What Does This Mean?

Charlie Ternan was a college senior, three weeks away from graduation, when he took what he thought was a Percocet to help alleviate his back pain. He had taken the medication before, but the pill Charlie took wasn't from his doctor — he purchased it online. He didn't know that it was counterfeit and contained fentanyl. One pill killed him within 30 minutes. Charlie is not alone — in 2020, 76% of drug-related deaths in people ages 14-23 involved fentanyl. And many teens didn't even know they were taking it.

Part 1: Understanding the Issue

The only safe pills are ones that are prescribed to you by a doctor and filled at a licensed pharmacy. Use information from **realdealonfentanyl.com** and this word bank to understand why.

Word Bank

counterfeit	drugs	fentanyl	gamble
lethal	one	pills	

1. Illegal ______ is cheap, potent, and profitable — so it is often found in illicit drugs.

2. Fentanyl is also pressed into _____, made to look like real medications. These

______ pills are hard to identify. Can you tell the difference in the photo of the pills above?



3. 70% of fake pills confiscated by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in 2023 contained a potentially ______ dose of fentanyl.

4. You can't see, smell, or taste if a drug contains fentanyl, and there's no quality control for fake pills. This makes every dose a _____.

5. Fake pills and other _____ change hands too many times to know what's in them. In a batch of 4 pills, _____ pill can be deadly even if the others aren't.



Sample images from the DEA. Can you tell the difference?

Part 2: How Can You Help?

Knowing what to do in the case of an overdose — and acting quickly — can save lives. Visit **realdealonfentanyl.com** to answer the following questions.

- **1.** What are some signs of an overdose?
- **2.** What should you do if you are concerned that someone is overdosing?
- 3. What are opioid overdose reversal medications?

4. What is a Good Samaritan law?

5. What are the Good Samaritan laws in your state?



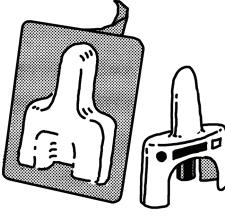


What Can I Do?

Part 1: Life-Changing

Fentanyl is a very real risk to communities, but there are ways to help. One way is to carry or know how to access opioid overdose reversal medications, even for those who don't use drugs. It could save a life.

Here are some FAQs about opioid overdose reversal medications to help you and your family better understand what they are and how they work. Learn more at **realdealonfentanyl. com/reverse-anoverdose** or visit **cdc. gov/stopoverdose/ naloxone/index.html**.



1. What are opioid overdose reversal medications?

They are medications that can reverse an opioid overdose in minutes by blocking the effects of the opioids in the body. They are safe, legal, and easy to use.

2. What are the names of common opioid overdose reversal medications?

Naloxone and nalmefene.

3. Does it require a prescription?

Some versions of naloxone nasal spray are available over the counter in all 50 states and can be found on pharmacy shelves. Nalmefene nasal spray and naloxone injections require a prescription.

4. How is it administered?

Nasal spray is administered through the nose. Simply peel open the container, place the nozzle into a person's nostril, and press the plunger to release. It cannot be self-administered.

5. How else is naloxone available in your community? Check out harmreduction.org/resource-center/harmreduction-near-you to learn about your community. There are programs across the country and people most at-risk can get naloxone by mail.

6. Now a question for you: Does your school nurse keep naloxone in their office?

Part 2: Think About It

Think about what you've learned about fentanyl. List steps you can take to protect yourself and others close to you from an accidental overdose. The pages titled *Help Your Friends* and *Reduce the Risk* at **realdealonfentanyl. com** can help.

Protect Myself

Protect Others

Part 3: Consider the Facts

What have you learned about fentanyl that surprised you? If a friend had a pill and didn't know where it came from, what would you want them to know? Write your answer on the back of this sheet.



Reproducible Handout for Families

The Real Deal on Fentanyl

Parents and Caregivers,

The U.S. is facing an overdose crisis caused by fentanyl — a powerful synthetic opioid. In school, your child has been learning about the risks of fentanyl and reversing an opioid overdose with a program from the Ad Council, in partnership with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and educational specialists at Young Minds Inspired. This handout features information about fentanyl to help you talk with your child about the crisis and help keep your family safe.

What is fentanyl?

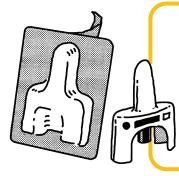
- Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.
- It is cheap to produce and used to manufacture illicit drugs.
- It may be found in fake pills that look like real medication.

How can we reduce the risks?

- Make sure your children know to only take pills prescribed by a doctor and filled at a pharmacy, and not to take pills from a friend even if they say that they're real.
- Know the signs of an overdose: tiny pupils; limp body; inability to talk; cold or clammy skin; breathing is very slow or has stopped; extremely sleepy or passing out; snoring, choking, or gurgling sounds; pale, gray, or bluish skin.
- Be prepared to take action in the event of an overdose.
- Carry naloxone.

Why is fentanyl a concern?

- Overdose deaths among people ages 10-19 doubled from 2019 to 2021. 84% of these overdoses involved fentanyl.
- 2 milligrams of fentanyl is considered a potentially lethal amount
 that's about the size of a few grains of sand or salt.
- You can't see, smell, or taste if a drug contains fentanyl.
- Many kids do not use fentanyl on purpose. They buy counterfeit pills online or get them from friends they trust to help them study or cope with stress or depressed feelings without knowing that they're fake versions of prescription pills and may contain fentanyl.



What is naloxone?

- Naloxone is a fast-acting medication that can reverse an opioid overdose.
- It's safe, legal, and available without a prescription in all 50 states.
- Learn more at dropthefbomb.com/ reverse-an-overdose.

How can I help my child?

- Talk with your child about the risks of fentanyl.
- Encourage them to speak with you or another trusted adult if they're struggling with emotions or are concerned about a friend.
- Discuss naloxone. Even if you feel that drugs and counterfeit pills are not something your family has to worry about, remember that you or your child could potentially save someone's life as a bystander by carrying naloxone.

Learn more

Check out realdealonfentanyl.com

with your child and **dropthefbomb.com** (for parents) to learn more about fentanyl and talking to your child about it.





