

Preventing Exposure to Fentanyl or related Opioids for Non-First Responders

What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is similar to morphine, but is 50 to 100 times more potent. The high potency of Fentanyl increases the risk of overdose, especially if the user is unaware that a powder, liquid or pill contains Fentanyl. For example, Fentanyl can be mixed with heroin or cocaine, which amplifies its potency and potential danger.

What are Fentanyl Analogues?

An analogue is a compound having a structure similar to that of another. Fentanyl analogues like Ohmefentanyl and Carfentanil are significantly more potent than Fentanyl. Carfentanil, for example, is about 10,000 times more powerful than morphine. It is colourless, odorless and can resemble white salt.

What is the risk to employees?

Depending on their role, staff may come into contact with people who have used these substances, have them in their possession, or may have used them in a City of Surrey facility. While the risk is low, exposure to opioids through inhalation or skin absorption can lead to overdose.

Be Aware of the Symptoms of Fentanyl Exposure:

- Feelings of euphoria and relaxation
- False sense of well-being
- Confusion
- Drowsiness/Sedation
- Dizziness/lightheadedness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Respiratory depression or arrest

What precautions should be taken to prevent exposure?

Wash your hands: Always wash your hands before you eat, drink, or smoke. If you believe you have been in contact with drug residue immediately wash your hands after the suspected contact.

Determine Level of Risk: Employees can determine the level of **risk of exposure** by assessing their work area, and taking the proper precautions including wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) – for example gloves. If in doubt, employees should speak with their manager/supervisor and/or Health & Safety.

- **Very Low Risk:** When performing regular tasks like touching door handles; pressing elevator buttons; or exchanging papers. **PPE/Precautions:** No PPE required unless it's necessary to control other hazards.
- **Potential Risk:** When performing tasks like taking blood samples; providing first aid; cleaning surfaces with no visible powders in areas with or without known drug use; and/or collecting sharps containers. **PPE/Precautions:** Wear appropriate PPE for cleaning and disposing of materials. Put on gloves; use pocket masks for CPR; and wash hands regularly.
- **High Risk:** When finding an unknown powder substance in an area associated with an overdose, with a medical emergency and/or there are signs of recent drug use (i.e. used needles). **PPE/Precautions:** Immediately clear everyone from the area and do not let anyone disturb the scene. Do not attempt to clean it up or determine what it is. Call 911, explain the situation, and follow their instructions.

Call 911 immediately if you believe you or anyone else has been exposed.