



My Drift

Title: Fentanyl

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Hawaii News Now reporter Allyson Blair recently provided a multi-part report on the deadly drug epidemic here in Hawaii.



The new data from the Hawaii Medical Examiner showed of the 452 people who died of an overdose last year, about a third had multiple drugs in their systems. The most deadly drug combination was Crystal Methamphetamine (Meth) and Fentanyl. This made the year 2022 the most deadly on record – 2023 is on track to be worse.

HAWAII DRUG DEATHS

Drug Deaths by Category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Fentanyl	13	10	9	19	28	48	79
Heroin	20	9	15	19	21	19	12
Opioid	76	59	44	34	26	38	38
Meth	136	133	162	182	201	207	210
Cocaine	12	14	18	16	16	16	30
Other Rx	76	60	47	62	49	52	60
Non-Rx	2	6	10	5	9	16	23

For years Crystal Meth has been the most addictive and deadly drug in Hawaii. But now we are being told that Fentanyl is more deadly. I know how bad Crystal Meth (ICE as they call it on the streets) is since I have researched it and wrote an article about it in July 2006. I know very little about Fentanyl so let's find out a few things about this dangerous drug.

Fentanyl

Official Name

Fentanyl

Street Names

Apache, China girl, China town, China white, murder 8, jackpot, poison, TNT, tango and cash.

What is it?

Fentanyl is a powerful pain medication. It is an opioid, like morphine, codeine, oxycodone, and methadone. Fentanyl is most often prescribed as a slow-release patch to people with long-term, severe pain. When used in this way, it can be very effective and safe.

Fentanyl is much stronger than most other opioids—up to 100 times stronger than morphine—and is very dangerous if misused. Even a small amount can cause an overdose and death.

Where does it come from?

Street fentanyl can come from two sources:

- ✚ illegal drug labs or
- ✚ patches that have been sold by or stolen from people they were prescribed to.

What does it look like?



Fentanyl comes in many forms



Some Fentanyl pills look like candy

Most street fentanyl is produced illegally as a powder. Street fentanyl may be swallowed, smoked, snorted, or injected. Fentanyl is released from prescription patches, by smoking or chewing.



Fentanyl is sold as a powder or a pill or is cut into (mixed with) drugs such as meth, heroin, or cocaine. This type of fentanyl is usually sold as another substance, so people swallow, snort, or inject it without realizing how dangerous it is. Many overdoses have occurred because people did not know that what they were taking was contaminated with fentanyl.



If you or someone you know uses opioids, it is a good idea to have a free naloxone kit. Naloxone is a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive.

How does it make you feel?

When they're used properly to treat pain, opioids reduce pain and the emotional response to pain. However, when they are misused, they may produce:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| + euphoria | + vomiting |
| + drowsiness | + constipation |
| + relaxation | + loss of appetite |
| + difficulty concentrating | + sweating |
| + constricted pupils | + overdose |
| + slowed breathing | + death. |
| + nausea | |

When someone overdoses on fentanyl, they first become sleepy, and it is hard to wake them. Their breathing becomes slow and shallow. They may snore, and they may pass out.

The person's body may become limp, their face pale or clammy, and their pulse weak or slow. For lighter-skinned people, the lips and finger tips may turn blue or purple. For darker-skinned people, the inside of the lips may become blue or purple.

If someone is overdosing, call 911 right away!

Why is it so dangerous?

Fentanyl is dangerous for many reasons:

- + It is often impossible to tell if a powder or pill contains fentanyl. You can't see it, smell it, or taste it. Even your dealer might not know what they are selling or how strong it is.
- + Because fentanyl is so strong, the difference between a dose that will get you high and a dose that can kill you is very small.
- + You can overdose even if you use someone's prescription patch and know the dose. Everyone handles fentanyl differently. One person's dose can kill another person.
- + If you are using other drugs at the same time—for example, other opioids, alcohol, or sedatives such as Xanax, Valium, or Ativan—the risk of overdose is much higher.



What are Synthetic Opioids?

Synthetic opioids are substances that are synthesized in a laboratory and that act on the same targets in the brain as natural opioids (e.g., morphine and codeine) to produce pain relief effects. In contrast, natural opioids are naturally occurring substances extracted from the seed pod of certain varieties of poppy plants. Some synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl and methadone, have been approved for medical use.

Common Synthetic Opioids

The most commonly used synthetic opioids are Fentanyl, Methadone, Buprenorphine and Tramadol.

- ✚ **Fentanyl:** This powerful drug is at least 100 times more powerful than morphine. It's the most widely used synthetic opioid. The drug is produced to relieve pain in surgical cases, but it's also made for illegal street distribution.
- ✚ **Methadone:** Methadone is a synthetic opioid that's commonly used in medication-assisted treatment for patients who are diagnosed with addiction to other prescription or illicit opioids. Apart from therapy in opioid use disorder, it's used for severe pain management.
- ✚ **Buprenorphine:** Buprenorphine a synthetic opioid that is effective in the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD). Buprenorphine is a controlled substance and has the potential for misuse. However, unlike methadone, it is less likely to lead to overdose unless combined with other sedatives.
- ✚ **Tramadol:** Tramadol is used for moderate to severe pain relief. It may be taken orally or as an injection. When taken orally, it provides rapid pain relief.

Benefits of Synthetic Opioids

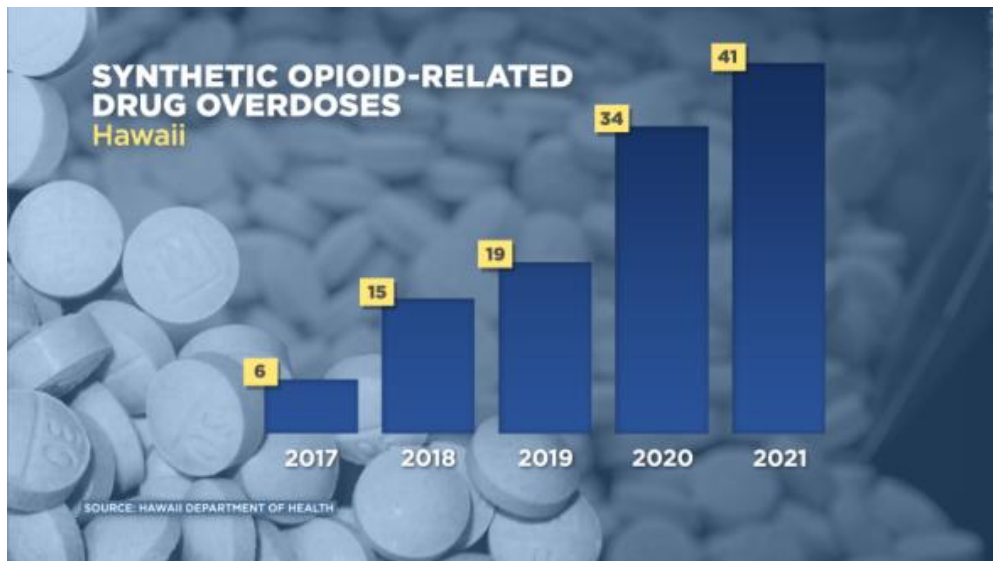
Synthetic opioids have significant advantages over naturally derived opioids for the pharmaceutical industry producing necessary pain management medications, such as:

- ✚ **No cultivation:** There's no need to plant, monitor and harvest poppy plants for the creation of synthetic opioids.
- ✚ **Faster production:** Without the planting and harvesting of plants, opioids can be produced quicker and cheaper.
- ✚ **Higher potency:** Many synthetic opioids are far more potent and work faster in the treatment of chronic pain.
- ✚ **Lower costs:** Faster production helps the prescription drug market by making more medication available with lower overhead and cheaper prices.

Dangers of Synthetic Opioids

Synthetic opioids and natural opioids have similar risks, but since synthetic opioids are more potent, users may experience the following harmful effects:

- ✚ **High risk of overdose:** Taking more medication than prescribed or mixing synthetic opioids with alcohol, benzodiazepines or other opioids can result in overdose and death.
- ✚ **Damage to veins:** If you inject synthetic opioids into your arteries or veins, they can cause blood clots, infections, or the destruction of tissue in your limbs over a longer period of use.
- ✚ **Negative effects associated with natural opioids:** Many negative effects are associated with natural opioids, such as loss of consciousness, coma, lethargy, nausea, itching and constipation.



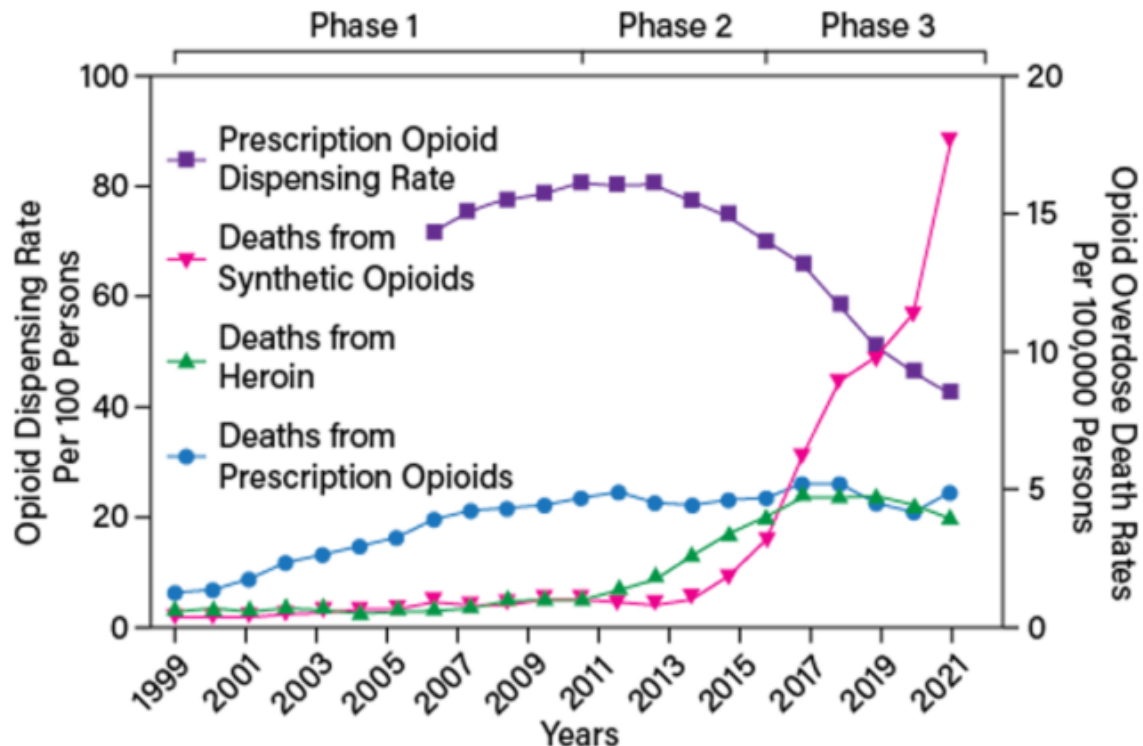
Using synthetic opioids without a doctor's prescription can also lead to addiction, which in turn can cause disruption of family life, poor health, and loss of employment.

List of commonly abused opioids

The following includes the most abused opioids used for pain relief in the United States:

- ✚ Morphine (naturally occurring opioid)
- ✚ Codeine (naturally occurring opioid)
- ✚ Heroin (semi-synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Oxycodone (semi-synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Oxymorphone (semi-synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Hydrocodone (semi-synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Buprenorphine (synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Methadone (synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Fentanyl (synthetic opioid)
- ✚ Tramadol (synthetic opioid)

DEATH RATES FROM OPIOIDS



The above chart shows that Deaths from Synthetic Opioids (mostly Fentanyl) are skyrocketing!

Facts About Opioid Addiction

Both legally prescribed and illegal opioids may cause euphoria — a pleasurable sense of well-being — in some people. Not everyone experiences euphoria when taking opioids, but for those who do, there is a risk of repeatedly using the drug because of the way it makes them feel.

This is why opioid drugs, even those prescribed by a doctor, are very addictive and can lead to opioid use disorder. Using any opioids for their euphoric effect, even for a short time, raises the risk of substance use disorder, overdose, and death.

Nonmedical use of opioids can include swallowing capsules or tablets, inhaling powder (including crushed tablets) through the nose or injecting opioids into a vein with a needle. Using a needle to take opioids nonmedically raises the risk of infection, including hepatitis and HIV.

About 75% of people in the U.S. who became addicted to street opioids such as heroin during the 2000s report that they started out taking prescription opioid drugs. This trend may be related to availability: In most parts of the United States, fentanyl is cheaper and easier to obtain than prescription opioids.

A person with opioid use disorder may experience financial difficulties due to the high cost of obtaining drugs illegally, and this may lead to stealing others' prescription opioid medications, personal belongings, or cash. Difficulty with family, interpersonal relationships and other aspects of life can grow worse as the disorder progresses, and the affected person may not be able to stay employed.



I used to think that Heroin was the worst drug – not anymore!



The Opioid Epidemic BY THE NUMBERS

14,480

Deaths attributed to overdosing on heroin (in 12-month period ending June 2020) ³



70,630

People died from drug overdose in 2019 ²

1.6M

People misused prescription pain relievers for the first time ¹

1.6M

People had an opioid use disorder in the past year ¹

2M

People used methamphetamine in the past year ¹

745K

People used heroin in the past year ¹



50K

People used heroin for the first time ¹



48,006

Deaths attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids other than methadone (in 12-month period ending June 2020) ³

10.1M

People misused prescription opioids in the past year ¹

Opioid Addiction can be both progressive (getting worse over time) and fatal. Opioid overdose deaths are rising to epidemic levels in Hawaii and the rest of the United States.

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