

Checking for fentanyl in your drugs using fentanyl test strips

As the presence of fentanyl, a strong, fast-acting opioid has increased in the illicit drug supply, individuals may wish to test all or a portion of their drugs prior to use. General guidance for the testing of drugs varies based on the type of drug and/or the mode of administration (i.e. how you intend to use your drug). These directions can be found later in this document. All information in this document is in relation to the BTNX fentanyl drug check strip (20 ng/ml cut off level, product number FYL-1S48-100). Please note that there are many caveats and limitations to the use of these strips for the purpose of checking drugs for the presence of fentanyl.

Major limitations for using fentanyl test strips to check your drugs:

- These are not Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for this use.
- Test strips do not indicate the amount of a substance, just the presence or absence of fentanyl (or fentanyl analogs).
- False positives may be common with MDMA or methamphetamine. This can sometimes be prevented by diluting the drug in a larger amount of water. However, there is not a consensus nationally on how much water to use, particularly since the strength of the drugs vary by time and place.
- Other drugs, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) can also result in false positives.
- A negative result does not mean that the drug is “safe” to use.
- Testing all of your drug is ideal to only testing a portion of your drug, but due to patterns of substance use, this is not usually realistic. This means you should test every time you use.
- The illicit drug supply changes frequently and drugs are not always evenly mixed. This means that a portion of your drug may not contain fentanyl, while another portion may contain fentanyl. This is referred to as the “chocolate chip cookie effect,” with the cookie representing all the drug, and the chocolate chips representing fentanyl. Further, even if you purchase from the same individual, there can be variability in the drug concentrations or mixtures between purchases.
- When unsure or unable to test a drug, assume that fentanyl is present and ensure someone is around who can recognize and respond to an opioid overdose.

Basic steps:

- Use drug residue from a baggie or cooker, or a small portion of a crushed pill or powder and add a bit of water to the sample.
- Hold the blue end and dip the other end of the strip into the solution. Do not dip the strip past the wavy lines. Hold the strip in the solution for 15 seconds.
- Wait five minutes and then read the results. After 10 minutes these results may not be accurate.

Reading results:

There are two lines that can form.

- A single line indicates either a positive result for fentanyl, or that the test was invalid.
 - When the single line is near the top (closer to the solid blue portion of the strip), this means the result is positive. A positive means the drug may contain fentanyl.
 - When the single line is near the bottom (closer to the wavy lines that were dipped in the solution), this means it is invalid. Note that this line would appear only 5mm away from the line indicating a positive, so individuals must be cautious that they are

reading the appropriate line. An eraser on a pencil is about 5mm in length. In the event of an invalid result, test again using a new fentanyl test strip.

- Two lines indicates a negative result for fentanyl. Negative result means that fentanyl was not detected.

Testing heroin, cocaine, or pressed pills for injection:

- Prepare your drugs as you would typically.
- Once you draw up your drugs into the syringe, but before injecting, add about 10 drops of water to your cooker (or about ¼ inch).
- Stir well.
- Hold the blue end and dip the other end of the strip into the solution. Do not dip the strip past the wavy lines. Hold the strip in the solution for 15 seconds.
- Wait five minutes and then read the results. After 10 minutes these results may not be accurate.

Testing pills or powder for insufflation (snorting) that are not MDMA or methamphetamine:

- Crush up your pills or powder to create as fine a powder as possible.
- Put the drug back into a baggie and shake it as much as possible to coat the insides of the bag.
- Dump the drug back out onto a different surface/container for later use.
- Add a small amount of water to the bag.
- Hold the blue end and dip the other end of the strip into the solution. Do not dip the strip past the wavy lines. Hold the strip in the solution for 15 seconds.
- Wait five minutes and then read the results. After 10 minutes these results may not be accurate.

Testing MDMA or methamphetamine:

- *There is no consensus on the best ways to reduce a false positive for fentanyl when testing MDMA or methamphetamine. Current guidance mentions the need to dilute the residue much more than is needed for other drugs, up to a half a cup of water.*
- Shards, even small pieces of shards should not be used for checking these drugs. Only use residue from a bag or cooker.
- Dilute with up to a half cup of water.
- Hold the blue end and dip the other end of the strip into the solution. Do not dip the strip past the wavy lines. Hold the strip in the solution for 15 seconds.
- Wait five minutes and then read the results. After 10 minutes these results may not be accurate.

Risk Reduction:

If fentanyl is present, there are some steps that can be taken to reduce risk of overdose:

- Do not use alone. If you do not have someone with you, utilize a service like [neverusealone.com](https://www.neverusealone.com)
- Let someone you're with know that your drugs tested positive for fentanyl and be ready to respond in case of an overdose.
- Make sure that you have naloxone available, are with someone who knows how to use it, and ensure they're able to call 911 in case of overdose.
- Use tester shots and smaller doses.
- Encourage others to test their drugs and use harm reduction strategies.