

# *Aging Adult's* **GUIDE TO FENTANYL**

## **WHAT IS FENTANYL?**

Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid drug. It is approved by the FDA for medical use to treat pain or as an anesthetic. The drug has been around since the 1960's but has become infamous over the past two decades due to the dramatic increase in overdose deaths attributed to its use. One reason fentanyl is so deadly is due to its potency. Fentanyl is 100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin; a fatal dose is small enough to fit on the tip of a pencil.

## **WHY IS IT A RISK?**

The fentanyl problem is a growing concern due to the large-scale production of the drug by unregulated manufacturers, like drug cartels. While the strength of fentanyl has long been concerning there has always been strict regulation. Unregulated production coupled with criminal distribution of fentanyl is exasperating the already rampant opioid epidemic. Drug dealers produce pills that resemble prescription drugs and mix fentanyl into illicit street drugs to increase potency. Many individuals buy illicit street drugs laced with a lethal dose of fentanyl and don't even know it. That is the scariest part about fentanyl, it could be anywhere!

## **EXPERIMENTATION COULD BE DEADLY**

In the past, drugs like heroin and cocaine were never safe but the risk of death was very minimal for someone who was experimenting in small amounts. This is no longer the case. Fentanyl changes everything because it requires caregivers to be extremely vigilant about their loved one's drug use. Experimenting with drugs is no longer a phase or a rite of passage for today's youth. It is a game of Russian roulette.

## **TALKING TO ADULT CHILDREN**



Keep the goal in mind and ask yourself why you want to speak to your child about fentanyl and drugs. The goal should be to help them understand the dangers of the drug and how it could potentially affect their children.



Ask them questions and listen to their opinions. Like most grown adults, they may have had experiences or encounters with drugs and will have established their own ideas. It's important to listen to these and do your best to correct any misinformation they have regarding fentanyl.



Give credit where credit is due; they may have become familiar with the risks and understand where these drugs are. This helps to build trust and more open communication.



Be in the present to encourage open communication. Paying attention may seem obvious, but it's easy to come across as uninterested in the conversation. Practice active listening. Remove distractions, make eye contact, and give them all your time.

## **TALKING TO GRANDCHILDREN**



Take advantage of teachable moments. Social media, television, and movies offer endless teachable moments for kids. This can lead to a talk about how drugs can harm their body and mind.



When speaking to children 8 to 12, for example, ask them what they've heard about drugs or fentanyl. Ask open-ended questions to ensure you can get an honest response. Research answers together and show them that you are listening.



Talking to teens can be a little different. Teens often face peer pressure. This could be friends or acquaintances who have tried drugs or alcohol. Ask them what they know and listen to their opinions. Speak to them about the consequences. Be clear and concise about boundaries and rules.



Avoid lecturing, threatening, or using scare tactics. Be a reliable source of factual information and be prepared to share your experiences.

