

Synthetic Opioids: The Unknown Facts and Hidden Risks

Over the past several years, there has been an increasing trend of death caused from synthetic opioids. In 2020 through April of 2021, more than 100,000 deaths from overdose occurred which was the highest in U.S. history. Of the 100,000 more than 60% of the deaths involved synthetic opioids.¹

The abuse of fentanyl has grown exponentially. In 2021 alone, there were 5x as many deaths from fentanyl than there were five years prior.²

- Naloxone continues to be an effective drug in reversing overdose with opioids, including the synthetic opioids, however larger doses of naloxone are required to reverse the effects of synthetics than commonly used³.

Did you know? 4 of 10 Drugs containing fentanyl, have enough to kill.²

79% of overdose cases in Milwaukee County contained fentanyl.⁵

78% of Heroin tested in Milwaukee using Fentanyl strips contained fentanyl.⁵

Emerging Threat! Novel "nitazene", 'Isotonitazene', found locally!

In Wisconsin and Illinois, isotonitazene alone is believed to have contributed to more than 40 deaths in Cook County and Milwaukee County in the first seven months of 2020.⁶

NOTICE: Point of care testing, and immuno-assays, may have as high as a 34% false positive/39% false negative rate due to the limited specificity these assays can provide.⁷ These assays also will identify fentanyl alone, not which fentanyl is present. Assurance utilizes definitive testing using liquid chromatography and tandem mass spectrometry (LC/MS/MS), which minimizes false negative and false positives and yields a positive result for both fentanyl and its metabolites as well as **Isotonitazene** and other **Fentanyl Analogs**.^{8,9}

1. Hazelden Betty Ford Spring webinar, Fentanyl and the Evolving Opioid Epidemic. March 2022.

2. In 5 years, Milwaukee County fentanyl overdoses have quintupled. TMJ4 <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-5-years-milwaukee-county-fentanyl-overdoses-have-quintupled>. March 2022.

3. DEA Facts About Fentanyl: <https://www.dea.gov/resources/facts-about-fentanyl>.

4. Fentanyl, fentanyl analogs and novel synthetic opioids: A comprehensive review. Patil Armenian et. Al. October 2017.

5. 360:Fentanyl Testing Strips to Become Legal in Wisconsin. TMJ4 <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/360/360-fentanyl-testing-strips-set-to-become-legal-in-wisconsin>. February 2022.

6. What Should You Know About Nitazenes? Daniel R. Gerard, MS, RN, NRP March 2022.

7. Manchikanti, et al. Comparative evaluation of the accuracy of immunoassay with liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry (LC/MS/MS) of urine drug testing (UDT) opioids and illicit drugs in chronic pain patients. Pain Physician 2011; 14(2): 175-87.

8. Stafford DT. Chromatography. In: Levine B, ed. Principles of Forensic Toxicology. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: AACC Press;2013:121-48.

9. Grebe, Stefan Kg, and Ravinder J Singh. "LC-MS/MS in the Clinical Laboratory - Where to From Here?." The Clinical biochemist. Reviews vol. 32,1 (2011): 5-31.

