

Guidance notes for
Consumers, Friends
and Families

Fentanyl



NCCRED

National Centre for Clinical
Research on Emerging Drugs

Who are **we?**



We are an innovative centre bringing together clinicians and researchers to detect and respond to trends in emerging drug health.

NCCRED strives to forge world-leading excellence in the treatment of methamphetamine and other emerging drugs of concern. We never lose sight of the fact that people who use drugs, as well as their families, carers and communities are at the core of what we do.

NCCRED aims to collaborate and build the capacity and scope for new clinical research into emerging drugs; and rapidly translate these findings into best clinical practice.

Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, NCCRED is made up of a consortium: The National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA, Flinders University); The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI, Curtin University); The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC, The University of New South Wales); and St Vincent's Health Australia. We are governed by a Board with an independent Chair.

About Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, available in Australia as a restricted medicine (Schedule 8) for anesthesia and the treatment of pain. It comes in sublingual, nasal, transdermal and injectable forms.

Illicitly manufactured fentanyl and its analogues (such as carfentanil and acetyl fentanyl) has been detected in the Australian market. Fentanyl is sometimes mixed with other illicit drugs to increase their potency. Its toxic effect on the nervous system is 100 times that of morphine.

Fentanyl related overdoses are increasing in Australia, with fentanyl-overdose related fatalities increasing nine-fold since 2000¹. Overdoses involving fentanyl and its analogues resulting from substances sold as heroin and stimulants such as methamphetamine and cocaine are emerging in Australia^{2,3}.

International studies show that many people who have survived fentanyl overdose were unaware that they ever took the drug⁴. Understanding the common risks with any drug taking, following harm reduction measures and knowing how to respond to an opioid overdose can reduce risk and save lives.

References

- 1 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global SMART Update Volume 17, March 2017. [internet] Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/Global_SMART_Update_17_web.pdf
- 2 Penington Institute 2018. Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2018, August, Melbourne: Penington Institute.
- 3 New South Wales Government Centre for Population Health. Drug Warning – Acetyl-Fentanyl and Fentanyl Dangerous Substance Alert 2020 [Internet]. Available at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/aod/public-drug-alerts/Pages/Dangerous-Substance-Alert-Acetyl-Fentanyl-and-Fentanyl.aspx>
- 4 Amlani A., et al. Why the FUSS (Fentanyl Urine Screen Study)? A cross-sectional survey to characterize an emerging threat to people who use drugs in British Columbia, Canada. Harm Reduct. J. 2015;12, 54

Management & Advice

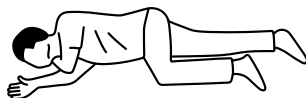


Opioid Overdose First Aid

**If you think someone is overdosing, act fast.
Don't wait to see if they will recover.**

1. **Call an ambulance 000.** Tell the operator that you believe the person is having a drug overdose. If possible, tell them what drug they have taken.

2. Put in recovery position (lying down on their side with their head resting on their arm).



3. Give one 400mcg dose of Naloxone.

4. If the person isn't breathing, then turn on back and give rescue breaths.

5. If no response, continue to administer doses every 2-3 minutes, some people might require all 5 doses.

6. Stay with the person until the ambulance comes and inform the paramedics how much naloxone has been given. It is important that the person gets medical attention in hospital. They may need observation for at least 4 hours – sometimes effects can be delayed.

7. If possible, give the paramedics a sample of the substance.



Take Home Naloxone

During an opioid overdose, the central nervous system slows down, and can stop a person from breathing. Naloxone is a short-acting drug that can temporarily reverse the effect of an opioid overdose, and give that person the ability to breathe again.

Naloxone is currently available nationally as a nasal spray or in a pre-filled syringe. In all states, Nyxoid® nasal spray and Prenoxad® pre-filled syringes are available over the counter from a pharmacy. With some basic training, it can be administered by anyone.

In NSW, WA and SA, the 'Take Home Naloxone' pilot offers Naloxone free of charge from community and hospital-based pharmacies, alcohol and drug treatment centres, needle and syringe programs, custodial release programs and GP clinics. Visit the Take Home Naloxone page for further details: www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/take-home-naloxone/

Take Home Naloxone is available for free in ACT, QLD, NT and VIC to opioid users, their friends and families through a number of services. Contact details for these areas are available on our website at www.nccred.org.au/naloxone



Harm Reduction

- Be aware that drug supplies change frequently, and no-one knows the exact content
- Always test a small amount of any new substance
- Try not to ever use alone, so if something goes wrong there is someone to get help
- Have naloxone and know how to use it
- Teach others to have naloxone and know how to use it
- Know the signs of overdose like falling unconscious, slow / shallow / no breathing, deep snoring, blue lips
- Know how to intervene and save a life

Need help?

If you or someone you know needs specialist drug and alcohol assessment and treatment either as an inpatient or outpatient; call your local Alcohol and other Drug intake team.

A comprehensive list can be found at www.nccred.org.au/aod-intake

Guidance notes for
Consumers, Friends
and Families

Advice & Treatment

Getting into drug treatment can reduce the risk of dying from an overdose. Call the National Alcohol and other Drug Information Service (ADIS) on:

1800 250 015

You will be automatically directed to the ADIS State or Territory you are calling from.



NCCRED

National Centre for Clinical
Research on Emerging Drugs