CANNABIS AND FENTANYL: FACTS AND UNKNOWNS

Introduction

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid approximately 100 times stronger than morphine and approximately 50 times stronger than heroin. It is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an analgesic (for pain relief) and an anesthetic (for anesthesia). Fentanyl-related overdose deaths have been largely attributed to illegally manufactured fentanyl that has become increasingly common in the unregulated drug supply.

The Office of Cannabis Management (Office) has created this fact sheet to address misconceptions about cannabis being mixed with fentanyl. The goal of this fact sheet is to provide evidence where it is available, to share information about what is currently known and unknown, and to provide safety tips to help alleviate some of these misconceptions, often spread through misinformed media coverage and anecdotal reporting.

The Office regulates cannabis licensees in New York State and has created a framework to help protect public health and safety. Purchasing cannabis products from the New York State regulated cannabis market is safer than buying unregulated products. When you buy legal products, they are lab tested and labeled accurately according to those lab tests.

Key Findings

Misinformation related to the danger of accidental overdose due to cannabis "contaminated" with fentanyl remains widespread.

Anecdotal reports of fentanyl "contaminated" cannabis **continue to be found to be false, as of the date of this publication.**

Many people who use opioids are stigmatized in health care settings. This contributes to mistrust that can result in inaccurate self-reporting or failure to disclose opioid use due to fear of inequitable care or punitive interventions by law enforcement.

Promoting opioid overdose prevention and other harm reduction strategies improves public health through evidence-based interventions and stigma reduction.

Date Published: August 2023

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Cannabis Management

If you have questions regarding the Office of Cannabis Management, please call us at **1-888-OCM-5151** (1-888-626-5151) or email us: **info@ocm.ny.gov**

Scan for more information or visit **cannabis.ny.gov**

Key Findings *(continued)*

Reliable testing protocols for the presence of fentanyl on cannabis flower remain unknown. Fentanyl test strips are commonly used to identify the presence of fentanyl in other substances to reduce potential harm and prevent opioid overdose.

Fentanyl test strips were designed for testing substances that are water soluble, with current testing methodologies focused on detecting the presence of fentanyl in powders or pills.

As stated in the Office of Addiction Services and Support's Fentanyl Test Strip Guidance, as fentanyl is not found in the cannabis supply, **it is not recommended to use fentanyl test strips to test cannabis.**

Please always refer to the most recent guidance available from the Office of Addiction Services and Supports for recommendations on the appropriate use of fentanyl test strips.

WHAT WE KNOW

Warnings related to fentanyl "contamination" in cannabis have increased as states continue to legalize cannabis.

At this time, ***there have been zero verified incidents of fentanyl "contamination" in cannabis.***

There is no guarantee that any unregulated cannabis product is free from contaminants or harmful ingredients.

FENTANYL FACTS

Fentanyl test strips are commonly used to identify the presence of fentanyl in other substances to reduce potential harm and prevent opioid overdose.

Fentanyl has been found in other drugs including heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA, and pressed pills.

STILL UNKNOWN

Cannabis products made available in the unregulated market may contain unknown or undisclosed contaminants and have inaccurate labeling.

Reliable testing protocols for the presence of fentanyl on cannabis flower remain unknown.

STAYING SAFE

Buying cannabis products from a New York State licensed dispensary ensures your product is lab tested and is free of harmful amounts of contaminants such as pesticides, heavy metals, and residual solvents.

The ***only*** way to ensure a cannabis product is lab tested and accurately labeled is by buying cannabis from a licensed dispensary.

Date Published: August 2023