



FENTANYL USE IN MONTANA

About Fentanyl:^{1,2}

- Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is about 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.
- There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illegally made fentanyl (IMF).
 - Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors, often after surgery and for advanced-stage cancers to manage pain.
 - IMF is distributed through illegal drug markets and is often added to other drugs due to its potency. People using drugs may not be aware that their drugs contain fentanyl.
- Fentanyl has been associated with recent increases in opioid overdoses, and most cases of fentanyl overdoses are related to IMF.

Key Points:

- In Montana, the rate of fentanyl overdose emergency department visits increased from 4.4 visits per 100,000 residents in 2021 (46 visits) to 13.0 visits per 100,000 residents in 2023 (137 visits).³
- The percentage of fatal drug overdoses in Montana involving fentanyl increased from 16% in 2020 to 50% in 2023.⁴
- Among testing of seized drug samples, there was a 24% increase in fentanyl prevalence during 2023, and a 3600% increase from 2020 to 2023.⁵ The Montana Department of Justice Forensic Science Division analyzed 17,722 samples from 2020 to 2023.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). [Fentanyl Facts](#).
2. United States Drug Enforcement Administration. (2021). [Facts About Fentanyl](#).
3. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. (2024). [Injury and Overdose Indicators Dashboard](#).
4. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. (2024). [Drug Overdose Deaths in Montana, 2014-2023](#).
5. Montana Department of Justice Forensic Science Division. (2024). [Annual Report – 2023](#).

For more information on what the Department of Public Health and Human Services is doing to address substance use disorder in Montana, please visit <https://dphhs.mt.gov/opioid>.