

FENTANYL & SKIN CONTACT

Misinformation about touching fentanyl puts lives at risk.
Being unexpectedly exposed to any drug can feel scary.

Here's What the Science Actually Says...

**TOUCHING
FENTANYL
CANNOT
CAUSE AN
OVERDOSE**



The CDC and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health are clear:

Skin contact with fentanyl does NOT lead to toxic effects,

just like touching sugar doesn't raise your blood sugar.

Being near fentanyl does not cause an overdose.

For fentanyl to have an effect, it must enter the bloodstream, which does not happen from simply being nearby.

The diagram shows a cross-section of a blood vessel with red blood cells and blue dots representing fentanyl particles. A red arrow points from the text 'For fentanyl to have an effect, it must enter the bloodstream, which does not happen from simply being nearby.' to the blood vessel.



Fentanyl does not absorb through skin quickly.

Medical fentanyl patches are made to go onto the skin, but the medicine slowly goes into the body over time.

Even then, they can take up to 35 hours to fully work. These patches need moisture, full skin contact, and long contact time.

Quick or accidental touch does not cause this.

There are **≡ZERO≡** confirmed cases of anyone overdosing from touching fentanyl.

The American College of Medical Toxicology and American Academy of Clinical Toxicology report no confirmed cases of emergency responders developing opioid poisoning from touching fentanyl. Reported symptoms are consistent with stress and panic responses, not opioid overdose.

What To Do If You Come Across Fentanyl

- 1 Stay calm
- 2 Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- 3 Wash your skin with soap and water as soon as possible



Signs and Symptoms of an Overdose

- Slow, shallow, or no breathing (less than one breath per 5 seconds)
- Unresponsive or unable to wake
- Blue or gray lips or fingertips
- Gurgling or choking sounds

If someone shows signs of an overdose, follow standard overdose response guidance.

These are NOT Signs of an Opioid Overdose

Sometimes fear of exposure can trigger a panic or stress response, which may include:



rapid breathing



racing heart



dizziness or feeling faint



sweating



tingling in hands or face



chest tightness

While these symptoms can be scary, these are symptoms of a panic or stress reaction.

Why Getting This Right Saves Lives

When people are afraid to go near fentanyl, real harm follows:

- Bystanders may hesitate or walk away instead of helping someone who is overdosing, costing critical time and lives.
- First responders can experience panic symptoms often mistaken for poisoning, pulling them away from the scene when they are needed most.
- Fear and stigma grow, making it harder for people who use drugs to get the help they need.



If you see someone who might be overdosing, it is safe to help.

Your response can save a life!

SCAN HERE

to access the TN Compassionate Overdose Response Guide:

Learn how to respond with confidence and care!

