



BACKGROUND INFO: WHAT'S IN THESE PILLS?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic drug—a white powder that's 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. It's being used to make fake prescription pills that look exactly like real medications such as Percocet, Xanax, Adderall and Vicodin. Other dangerous chemicals like nitazenes are also being found in fake prescription pills. Teens think they're taking a real prescription pill, but it's actually a fake made with fentanyl or other harmful substances.

Fake prescription pills are sold online, through social media, on the streets and at the mall. Just 2 milligrams of fentanyl (about the size of a few grains of salt) can be lethal—teens have died from taking just half of a fake prescription pill. Fentanyl and other dangerous chemicals are also contaminating other drugs like cocaine and MDMA.

KEY INFO TO SHARE

- Nearly half of teens don't know that fake prescription pills are made with fentanyl
- Fake prescription pills look exactly like real ones
- They're sold online, through social media, on the streets, at the mall, etc.
- 5 out of 10 fake prescription pills contain enough fentanyl to be lethal
- 83% of teens are less likely to misuse pills after learning about the dangers
- Fentanyl is also being used to lace or fake other drugs like cocaine and MDMA
- Only pills from your doctor and a pharmacy are safe

CONVERSATION TIPS

DO:

- Be factual and calm
- Focus on safety, not judgment
- Encourage questions
- Provide resource materials for more information

DON'T:

- Use scare tactics
- Make assumptions about what they know
- Judge or shame
- Overwhelm with too much information at once

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- **For Parents & Families:** The New Drug Talk at thenewdrugtalk.org.
- **For Latino Parents & Families:** La Nueva Drug Talk at lanuevadrugtalk.org.
- **For Teens:** Real Talk for Teens and Young Adults at songforcharlie.org/page/for-teens-young-adults
- **For Schools:** Real Talk About Fake Pills film and resources at songforcharlie.org/page/youth-assembly-film
- **For General Info:** songforcharlie.org

HOW TO HANDLE COMMON QUESTIONS

When people ask, **"How can you tell if a pill is fake?"**

"You can't. Fake prescription pills are made to look exactly like real ones—same color, same markings, same shape. The only way to be safe is to only take pills that come directly from a doctor and pharmacy."

When people ask, **"Why is fentanyl in fake prescription pills?"**

"Fentanyl is cheaper and more profitable for dealers than real prescription drugs. They can make fake prescription pills for pennies and sell them as expensive medications like Percocet or Xanax."

When people ask, **"How does fentanyl get into pills?"**

"Illegal drug makers press fentanyl and filler powders into pill presses that look exactly like real prescription medications, then distribute them through dealers and sell them online."

When people ask, **"Are all fake prescription pills equally dangerous?"**

"No—think of it like chocolate chips in a cookie. Some cookies have a lot of chocolate chips, some have just a few. With fake prescription pills, the fentanyl is mixed in unevenly. Some pills might have very little, others might have a deadly amount. You can't tell which is which by looking. And just because one pill from a batch doesn't hurt someone, another pill from the same batch could be lethal."

When people ask, **"How much is dangerous?"**

"Just 2 milligrams—about the size of a few grains of salt—can be lethal. Even half a fake prescription pill has killed people."

When people ask, **"Can you test pills to see if they're fake?"**

"There are test strips that can detect fentanyl, but they're not 100% reliable, require the pill to be ground up (which makes it unusable), and don't test for other dangerous chemicals. The only way to be completely safe is to only take pills from a doctor and pharmacy."

When people ask, **"What about marijuana and fentanyl?"**

"Fentanyl contamination in marijuana is extremely unlikely to be intentional or widespread. Most reports of fentanyl laced marijuana harms turn out to be situations where someone used both substances individually (such as unknowingly taking a fake prescription pill and then smoking a joint). The main threats are fake prescription pills and commonly laced or faked street drugs like cocaine and MDMA."

If you don't know the answer to a question or if someone wants more information:

"That's a great question. I don't have an answer right now, but let me connect you with our resources at Song for Charlie where you can get more detailed information. You can reach them at songforcharlie.org or realtalk@songforcharlie.org."

TAILOR THE MESSAGE TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Different audiences need different messages. Tailor your approach based on the age group you're speaking with—what works for parents won't work for elementary kids. Use the sections below to find the right message for your audience.

FOR PARENTS

The 1-Minute Message:

The drug landscape has completely changed. Fake prescription pills made with fentanyl and other dangerous chemicals are now everywhere—sold on social media, at school, even in your neighborhood. Your kids need to hear from YOU about this.

Key Points:

- Half of teens don't know about fake pills—make sure yours does
- Teens should only take pills that come from a doctor and pharmacy
- Ask them to come to you if they're feeling anxious, depressed or struggling
- When parents have these conversations, 83% of teens are less likely to misuse pills

Sample Conversation Starter: "I've been learning about fake prescription pills that are being sold to teens. They look exactly like real medicine but can be really dangerous. I want you to know you can always talk to me if you have questions or if you're going through a tough time."

FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS

The 1-Minute Message:

Medicine safety is important. Only parents or caregivers should give you medicine.

Key Points:

- Only take medicine from your parents, caregivers or school nurse
- Never pick up pills or medicine you find on the ground
- Tell a trusted adult right away if you find pills or medicine
- Real medicine comes from doctors and pharmacies

Simple Language: "Medicine can help you feel better, but it's only safe when it comes from grown-ups you trust. If you ever find pills anywhere, don't touch them—tell a grown-up right away."

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS

The 1-Minute Message:

Fake prescription pills are being made with dangerous chemicals like fentanyl. They look exactly like real pills but can hurt you.

Key Points:

- Fake prescription pills are sold online and through social media
- They're very dangerous, not what you think they are, and could hurt you
- Nearly half of teens don't know about this—now you do
- Only take pills from a doctor and pharmacy
- Come to a trusted adult if you're feeling anxious, sad or overwhelmed

Conversation Approach: "You might see pills being sold online or at school. Even if they look real, they could be fake and dangerous. If you're ever struggling with stress or feeling down, talk to an adult you trust instead."

FOR HIGH SCHOOL KIDS

The 1-Minute Message:

Fake prescription pills and contaminated drugs are a serious risk. Here's what you need to know to stay safe and help your friends.

Key Points:

- Fake prescription pills contain fentanyl and other dangerous chemicals
- Other drugs like cocaine and MDMA are also being laced and faked
- Just because one pill or line didn't hurt you, the next one could
- Only take pills from a doctor and pharmacy
- Talk to trusted adults when you're struggling with mental health
- Learn to recognize overdose signs and how to use naloxone

Overdose Recognition:

- Blue lips or fingernails
- Slow or no breathing
- Won't wake up or respond
- Call 911 immediately and give naloxone if available

Naloxone Use:

- Remove cap and insert in nostril
- Press firmly to release dose
- Call 911 even if the person wakes up
- Stay with them until help arrives