

# Dept. of Health Services: Free fentanyl test strips now available statewide

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) today announced that 120,600 fentanyl test strips have been distributed to organizations across the state to help prevent drug overdose deaths. Drugs mixed with [fentanyl](#) are the leading cause of overdose deaths in Wisconsin.

“Wisconsinites who use drugs are more likely to encounter fentanyl than ever before,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “Tragically, many people who use drugs have no idea they are ingesting fentanyl until it’s too late. That’s why we need to empower our family members, friends, and neighbors who use drugs to have as much information as possible to protect their safety. Fentanyl test strips are a critical tool in our efforts to save lives.”

Fentanyl test strips are dipped into drug residue dissolved in water. Within minutes, a person can know whether the drug contains fentanyl. A tiny amount – as little as two grains of salt – is enough to kill someone. With information from the test, a person can take steps to reduce their risk of an overdose. In Wisconsin, fentanyl is present in many drugs, including cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine, as well as pills made to resemble prescription medications. Because fentanyl is unable to be detected by sight, taste, smell, or touch, people taking drugs not purchased from a licensed pharmacy should always use fentanyl test strips. Fentanyl test strips do not provide information about the amount or strength of fentanyl in a drug supply.

The first phase of the DHS fentanyl test strip distribution program is a partnership with tribal nation health clinics, county health and human services departments, county and municipal health departments, and organizations that work with people

who inject drugs. These agencies are receiving fentanyl test strip packages directly from the manufacturer. Each package contains one fentanyl test strip and instructions on how to use it. The participating organizations are handing out the packages at no cost. A [map of pick-up locations](#) is available on the DHS website.

There is no limit on the number of fentanyl test strips that someone can receive through this program. Participating organizations have access to an unlimited supply of packages. Other types of organizations are expected to be eligible to participate in the program in future phases.

In 2020, there were 812 overdose deaths in Wisconsin where illegally manufactured fentanyl was considered to be probable or suspected in contributing cause of death. Recognizing the value of fentanyl test strips in reducing the harms of drug use, Gov. Tony Evers signed legislation in March to allow the test strips to be used in Wisconsin.

The first phase of the fentanyl test strip distribution program is funded by \$1.25 million from Wisconsin's share of the American Rescue Plan Act, and is one of many strategies DHS is using to reduce the harms of drug use. Since 2019, 134,280 doses of NARCAN® have been distributed at no cost through community agencies to people who use opioids or drugs that could be mixed with opioids, and their families and friends. NARCAN® is the opioid overdose reversal drug. So far this year, more than 5,000 overdoses have been reversed with NARCAN® distributed through this program. NARCAN® also can be purchased at more than 500 pharmacies without a prescription under a standing order. [Locations where NARCAN® is available](#) can be found on the DHS website. DHS also encourages hepatitis C and HIV screening as part of an ongoing drug user health initiative.

Additional fentanyl test kits and doses of NARCAN will be purchased and distributed with funds made available from the National Prescription Opiate Litigation settlement funds.

People struggling with substance use can contact the Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline to be connected to treatment options. Call 211 or go to [addictionhelpwi.org](http://addictionhelpwi.org) (link is external).