

Dept. of Health Services: Issues public health advisory to warn of the risks of death from drugs laced with fentanyl

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Numbers show an increase in overdose deaths in Wisconsin are linked to the addition of synthetic substances and a mixture of drugs used

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has issued a [public health advisory](#) to inform Wisconsinites about the increased number of deaths caused by drugs laced with synthetic substances, especially [fentanyl](#).

Fentanyl is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and up to 100 times stronger than morphine. Because it is so strong and cheap to produce, people who manufacture illegal drugs use fentanyl to make other drugs more powerful and less expensive to make. Fentanyl can be added to pills, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, and other drugs.

[DHS data](#) shows that just last year, synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, were identified in 91 percent of opioid overdose deaths in Wisconsin, and in 73 percent of all overdose deaths. From 2019 to 2021, the number of fentanyl overdose deaths in the state grew by 97 percent.

“As we continue our work to promote mental health, reduce harm, and increase support for those struggling with substance use disorders, we can’t ignore the greater risks people face by not knowing what is included in the drugs they are taking,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “This is a public health crisis, and it’s necessary to sound the alarm to prevent unnecessary deaths.”