Drug Checking: Fentanyl Test Strips

What is Drug Checking?

Drug checking is a harm reduction tool that can help community members to better understand what is in their drugs.

Information on what is in a drug can help to reduce the risk of toxic drug poisoning.

Fentanyl test strips can help detect fentanyl and carfentanil in a drug sample. However, it won't tell you which one it is.

Fentanyl test strips can be ordered directly through FNHA's Harm Reduction Hub. Contact harmreduction@fnha.ca for more information.

Harm Reduction Strategies

- Try not to use alone: Use with a buddy
- If possible, use an overdose prevention site
- Download and use the Lifeguard or BeSafe App
- Have a naloxone kit and know how to use it.
- Use a test dose: Start low and go slow

Important

- Fentanyl test strips are NOT 100% accurate. A negative test does not mean a substance is safe.
- Fentanyl test strips only tell you if there is fentanyl in the portion of the drug tested. They do not tell you how much is there or how strong it is.

Considerations

- Do you have support from Chief and Council and your Health Director to implement drug checking?
- Who will be in charge of this work and what is their role?
- Does the community have the staff capacity to take on this work?
- Are you receiving other drug checking supports or have you reached out to other supports?

To order fentanyl test strips for your community or to request education contact harmreduction@fnha.ca
How to Use Fentanyl Test Strips

1. Check your drugs before use when possible.

Fentanyl test strips can be used to test any drug, equipment or baggie.

Check your drugs every time you use. Fentanyl may not be evenly distributed and test strip results may vary with each sample.

2. Pour 30ml of room temperature tap water into a small cup.

Tip: A 1 ounce shot glass = 30ml.

3. Put a small sample of the substance you are checking into the water (about a few grains of sand) and mix.

It is important not to add too much of the sample as it can interfere with the results.

4. Open the package at the notched end.

Hold the test strip by the blue end and be careful not to touch the white end.

5. Place the test strip into the cup of water to cover the wavy lines.

Be careful not to go past the solid blue line.

Hold the strip in the water for 15 seconds or until the red line appears.

Do not make dipping or stirring motions.

6. Place the strip on top of the package and wait 1-2 minutes for results.

Understanding the Results:

- **POSITIVE FOR FENTANYL**: 1 red line = fentanyl is in the sample.
- **NEGATIVE FOR FENTANYL**: 2 red lines = no fentanyl is in the sample.
- **NOT CLEAR TEST RESULT**: No red line next to solid blue area = retest.

Please read carefully: Interpreting the results on a fentanyl test strip is opposite to other tests (pregnancy or COVID) where 2 lines = positive.

Testing a Stimulant:

Large amounts of stimulant in a sample can lead to a false positive result.

If you think your substance is a stimulant and you get a positive result follow these steps:

- Add another 30 mls to the cup.
- Use a new test strip and follow the steps to test again.

Remember a negative result does not mean the substance is safe. It's best to follow the harm reduction strategies on the reverse page to help increase safety.

To order fentanyl test strips for your community or to request education contact harmreduction@fnha.ca