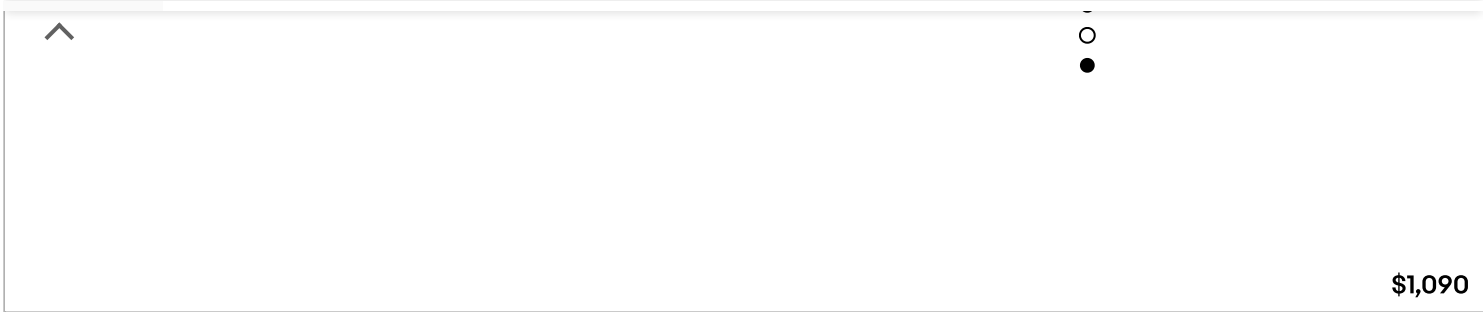


\$38,500

\$2,5



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Usa News

More New Yorkers Are Using Fentanyl Test Strips To Avoid Overdose

 yrtnews • 1 week ago  5  7 minutes read



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Deshawn Hendricks, 26, wants to check his medication for the powerful opioid fentanyl when he can because as a crack user he fears it could cause a life-threatening overdose. Matthew Todd, 32, is testing for another reason: As an opioid user, he's come to depend on the fast and intense intake of high fentanyl and wants to make sure what he's bought is "real".

On a sloping sidewalk that runs under the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, the two men accepted fentanyl test strips from outreach workers on a recent Thursday, along with sandwiches, water and Narcan, a drug that reverses overdoses. Around them, a few people were openly injecting drugs, while the occasional pedestrian passed by.

Mr Hendricks, who has a one-year-old daughter, said he suspected fentanyl was added to his crack to make the drug more addictive and even harder to quit. Using a test strip would "give me peace of mind, to explain how I feel," he said.

As the country grapples with a deadly overdose crisis, primarily caused by illicit fentanyl, a consensus is growing — from the Biden White House to political leaders in conservative states like Texas, Georgia and Alabama — that widespread distribution of fentanyl test strips can be effective. , if limited, means of reducing the destructive impact of the drug

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state where they are still banned because they are considered paraphernalia of drug use.

The tapes, which cost around a dollar, emerge as middle ground in a bitter debate over the overdose epidemic, in which one side prioritizes law enforcement as a way to prevent drug use, and the other emphasizes safer use and treatment. .

“There’s just this feeling that fentanyl has really been a game-changer,” said Corey Davis, director of the Network for Public Health Law’s Harm Reduction Legal Project, which tracks state drug testing laws. “There aren’t many specific things you can do to combat it.”

More than 2,100 people died from accidental fentanyl overdoses in 2021 in the city, among more than 67,000 deaths nationwide.

But the bands perform a different function depending on the user. Fentanyl is now present in much of the illicit drug supply, in unpredictable quantities. For people who use pills, ketamine, cocaine, or MDMA, for example, fentanyl strips may be particularly important because people without opioid tolerance are at higher risk of fentanyl overdose.

Fentanyl overdoses: what you need to know

Map 1 of 6

Understand the effects of fentanyl. Fentanyl is a potent and fast-acting drug, two qualities that also make it highly addictive. A small amount goes a long way, so it’s easy to suffer from an overdose. With fentanyl, there is only a short window of time to intervene and save a person’s life during an overdose.

Stick to licensed pharmacies. Prescription drugs sold online or through unlicensed dealers marketed as OxyContin, Vicodin, and Xanax are often mixed

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breathing slows and their skin often takes on a bluish tint. If you think someone is overdosing, call 911 immediately.

Buy naloxone. If you are concerned that a loved one may be exposed to fentanyl, you can purchase naloxone. The drug can quickly reverse an opioid overdose and is often available at local pharmacies without a prescription. Other users, including many who previously used heroin, have become addicted to fentanyl, and a positive result is unlikely to stop them from using it. But it can serve as a reminder for more careful use.

“It’s all about knowing your drug,” said Jose Martinez, who does street outreach with the National Harm Reduction Coalition in the Bronx.

For people now looking for fentanyl, a new type of strip may be more useful: a strip that tests for xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer that can cause horrible skin sores. Known on the street as tranq, xylazine increases the level of fentanyl and is already found in over 90% of the fentanyl supply in Philadelphia. He also began to appear in New York and elsewhere.

At the Bronx underpass, most people knew about tranq, and no one wanted to interfere.

“I want to stay away from that,” Mr. Todd said. “I don’t need another problem in my life.” When he heard that xylazine strips might soon be available, he said, “Definitely would use, damn it.”



Sales of fentanyl test strips have skyrocketed since the start of the pandemic as awareness of them has increased, said Iqbal Sunderani, chief executive of BTNX, a Canadian company that created the xylazine test strips and is also the leading manufacturer of fentanyl strips. . The company sold eight million tests in 2022, up from about 1.5 million in 2020, almost all to harm reduction organizations. A flood of Chinese-made bands are also entering the market.

Opioid users “are very interested in having them, even though there’s fentanyl in the whole heroin supply,” said Dr. Andrea Littleton of BronxWorks, the group that was handing out the strips by the way. Bronx Underground, adding, “But I think actually seeing the test come back positive changes their behavior. They’re still going to use it, but usually they’ll do a batch of testing or they’ll make sure someone checks them. .

Still, the tapes can be hard to find for many New Yorkers.

Darryl Phillips, 48, is a film producer and test strip evangelist trying to change that reality. He is the Executive Director of the ASAP Foundation, an acronym for Always Strive and Prosper. It was founded in honor of his friend A\$AP Yams, born Steven Rodriguez, a hip-hop influencer who died of an accidental overdose in 2015.

In around 60 bars, restaurants and galleries across the city, a small transparent box bearing the ASAP logo now sits behind the bar or on a table. The boxes contain dozens of fentanyl test kits and are regularly replenished by Mr Phillips



While some business owners are refusing to carry the kits, Mr Phillips said, others have changed their minds.

The Opioid Crisis

Opioids, whether in the form of potent pharmaceuticals or illegally manufactured synthetics, are fueling a deadly drug crisis in America.

“A few bars that were saying, ‘No, we don’t really need that’ or ‘We don’t have that crowd,’ were either experiencing an overdose in their bar or with someone close to them,” said he declared. . “And then they said, ‘Hey, actually, we’re going to take them. ’”

The city government also distributes test strips; it distributed 48,000 in 2022, most through nonprofits that target chronic opioid users.

One evening this month, Nneka Enerji, a Brooklyn-based DJ, took two ASAP kits from the bartender at Scarr’s, a pizzeria on Manhattan’s Orchard Street, and put them in her bag, saying she planned to take them. leave on his DJ booth. for anyone who needed it. She said she knows two people who recently overdosed.

“I really feel like these should be planted,” she said. “Just leave them in the toilet or on a train. Because people will see it as a sign.

New York City is also piloting a small program, with four locations, where a technician can give people a more detailed description of what’s in their medications in about 30 minutes.



used correctly. However, they have limitations. The strips cannot detect the amount of fentanyl present, and there may be fentanyl analogues that the strips do not detect. Testing fake pills, such as those meant to mimic Xanax or Adderall, is especially tricky because fentanyl can clump together in some parts of the pill but not others. The best approach is to dissolve the whole pill in water and test it.

At St. Ann’s Corner for Harm Reduction in the South Bronx — where drug addicts and recovering people can get free meals, needles and medical care — Joseph Dudnik, 58, credits fentanyl test strips with credit for saving his life and helping him get clean. .

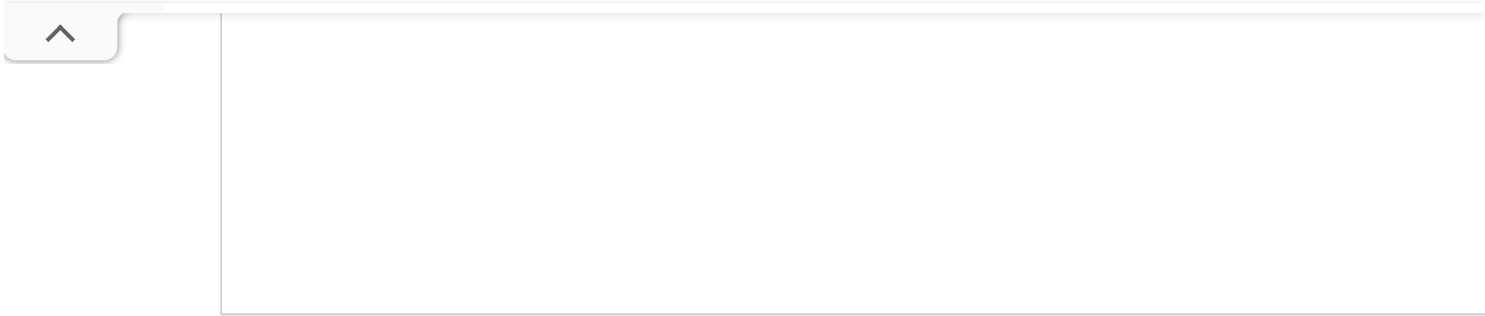
Mr Dudnik said that as a “high volume” crystal meth addict, he still used his drugs even when they tested positive for fentanyl. But he would use less.

“A few times if I had used what I wanted without testing it, I wouldn’t be here right now,” he said.

Knowing that fentanyl was in his drugs “most often” eventually helped him quit using, he said, because he hated how fentanyl made him feel. As of March 16, he had been clean for 12 days.

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