West Islip Health & Wellness Alliance

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What Parents Should Know About Fentanyl www.uhhospitals.org

Overdose deaths among U.S. teens have risen at an alarming rate due to the proliferation of fentanyl. It's more important than ever for parents to talk to their kids about the dangers of fentanyl, as well as other drugs and alcohol.

What Is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a powerful opioid that is legally prescribed for severe pain, but it is also found in many illicit drugs, such as counterfeit pills that are manufactured to resemble prescription drugs. An amount equal to 10-15 grains of table salt is enough to kill a person, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Most counterfeit pills resemble prescription oxycodone 30 mg pills (M30s), but they can also mimic other medications, such as Adderall and Xanax. Fentanyl also can be found in cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin. Teens and adults who take illicit drugs often aren't aware the substances are laced with fentanyl.

"Fatal overdoses have occurred when people thought they were using another substance but it was contaminated with fentanyl," says Jerri Rose, MD, Associate Division Chief and Education Director for Pediatric Emergency Medicine at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children's.

Fentanyl can seriously harm young children who accidentally come into contact with it, Dr. Rose says. "Young kids can get unintentionally exposed to fentanyl. This is something we have seen more commonly over the last several years, which is frightening because the effects can be deadly," she says.

"The emergence of "rainbow fentanyl" – brightly colored pills, powders and blocks made to look like candy – has created an even greater risk for kids. The DEA issued an alert in August 2022 about rainbow fentanyl, saying the drugs had been seized in 26 states that month.

How Parents Can Protect Their Kids From Fentanyl

Parents of young children should keep all medications up and away from children.

Teach young children to not put anything in their mouths unless a trusted adult says it's okay. "Also, when your children are visiting another household, make sure medications are locked up and out of reach," Dr. Rose says.

Parents of school-aged children should talk with them about drugs in general, and the extreme dangers of taking pills not prescribed to them.

Share with them the trends and dangers related to fentanyl-laced substances. A significant number of high school and college students purchase from dark web drug markets or through social media. They often believe they are purchasing Adderall or Xanax, which may be tainted with fentanyl.

Talk to teens about how to handle situations if they encounter offers for pills or other drugs, including through social media. "Parents need to discuss this with their kids and make sure they feel comfortable coming to them about it," Dr. Rose says.

Previous studies have shown that school-aged children want to hear more information about drugs from their parents, and that ***children exposed to frequent anti-drug messages at home are less likely to become users.***

Signs of Opioid Overdose or Poisoning

Children and teens who ingest fentanyl can become sleepy or lose consciousness completely. Their breathing becomes very shallow and weak. They can become limp and have a significant decrease in their heart rates and blood pressure. Their pupils often become constricted. They can have a change of color, appearing extremely pale and/or having blue lips."

- Marked change in activity level – confusion, lethargy
- Cold, clammy skin
- Change in pupil size (small pupils)
- Slowed, shallow breathing
- Pale skin and/or blueness of the lips
- Coma

"Parents observing these symptoms should call 9-1-1," Dr. Rose says. "Responding to symptoms of overdose is not something you want to wait around on."

Also, she adds, parents should inform paramedics and other members of the health care team if they suspect their child came into contact with fentanyl or other toxic substances. Medical workers can administer naloxone to reverse opioid overdose symptoms.

With young children, in particular, responders may not recognize that symptoms are fentanyl-related and parents may be reluctant to tell them, Dr. Rose says.

Knowing about any substances a child may have been exposed to is critical to administering the necessary medical treatments as quickly as possible.

The Dangers of Energy Drinks for Kids

Only a short time ago, teens didn't drink coffee because parents feared it would stunt their growth. That old myth was disproven – just in time for the coffee shop boom in the 90s. Today's teens have moved on from coffee to a new kind of energy-boosting beverage.

Energy drinks are a category of bottled drinks that contain caffeine, sugars, and stimulants. Parents used to worry about their teens drinking coffee Now, beverage makers have added sugar and stimulants for an extra boost. And this time, their concerns are soundly backed by science.

American teenagers have become hooked on ultra-caffeinated video game supplements that are fueling a sleep deprivation crisis among the country's youth, experts have warned. Powdered stimulants that are mixed in water and market themselves as the perfect aid for marathon gaming sessions have become hugely popular in recent years.

But while most parents recognize brands like Monster and Red Bull as energy drinks, experts warn gaming supplements could be mistaken for a protein shake because they are diluted in a gym shaker bottle. Just one scoop of the most popular brand 'G FUEL' contains more than double the amount of caffeine in a 12oz can of Red Bull. Tubs with up to 40 servings can be purchased easily online without any age restrictions. And while mainstream energy drinks have a finite amount of caffeine in them, tubs like G Fuel allow children to quickly refill and get their next hit.

Sales of G FUEL have more than doubled since 2019 and a third of its customers are under the age of 24. While Long Island-based G-Fuel brands itself as a special formulation to boost gaming performance, it is effectively just an energy drink. The recommended single seven gram (g) serving of the powder contains 140mg of caffeine. For comparison, a 8.4 fluid ounce (fl oz) can of Red Bull has 77mg of caffeine. It is not uncommon for children to double or triple scoop the product, with videos on platforms like Tik Tok and YouTube going viral glorifying such. A triple -shot of G FUEL could include up to 420mg of caffeine.

Here's what's in your teen's energy drink & why you should be concerned

Caffeine

Some experts suggest limiting a teen's caffeine intake to less than 100 mg per day, while others suggest that no amount of caffeine is safe. One 8 oz cup of coffee has about 100 mg of caffeine, depending on how it's brewed. The caffeine in energy drinks varies, but it is typically the primary ingredient. Some energy shots have over 200 mg.

The FDA categorizes caffeine as a food additive and a drug. Large amounts of caffeine can cause children problems like:

- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Disrupted sleep cycles
- High blood pressure
- Increased anxiety
- Mood swings
- Restlessness, jumpiness
- Seizures

Added Sugars

The American Heart Association recommends children 2-18 have less than 25 grams (6 teaspoons) of added sugar per day. The added sugar in a 12 oz can of soda varies by brand but has up to 11.5 teaspoons of added sugars.

The added sugar in energy drinks also varies significantly, but a 12 oz can have up to 13.75 teaspoons. Some popular energy drinks sold in oversized cans have as much as 66 grams of sugar – 16.5 teaspoons.

Added sugar can be listed under various names, including brown sugar, corn syrup, fructose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, maltose, sucrose, and more.

Drinking beverages that contain added sugars can be linked to these health conditions:

- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease
- Kidney stones
- Tooth decay
- Non-alcoholic liver disease
- Gout

Legal Stimulants

Along with caffeine and added sugars, energy drinks contain stimulants – that extra boost builds on excessive amounts of caffeine and sugar.

Those stimulants, like guarana, L-carnitine, and taurine, help make your teen feel more alert, energetic, and attentive. The downside is they can cause dangerous side effects like increased blood pressure, breathing rate, and heart rate. They may also disrupt sleep patterns and increase risky behavior.

It All Adds Up

When alone in reasonable amounts, sugar and caffeine in beverages are safe for adults. Sugar and caffeine can affect teens' developing bodies and brains differently. Regular use of energy drinks may keep your teen awake in math class but keeps their body in a state of elevated stress, which affects their brain and cardiovascular development.

The temporary boost your teen gets from energy drinks is just not worth the potential for harm. The best way to boost their energy is to help them follow a healthy diet, exercise, and get enough quality sleep. And they need proper hydration from healthy beverages like water.

Kids Vaping - Know the Risks

Vaping involves the absorption of nicotine and chemicals into the lungs that cause a variety of lung and mental health problems. Despite age restrictions in many states, many kids still get their hands on vape products.

How vape products work

The term "vaping" describes the inhalation and exhalation of an aerosol produced by a vape device. These devices include the following:

◊ E-cigarettes
◊ Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)
◊ Tank systems, often called "tanks" or "mods"
◊ Vape pens

Many of these devices are small and look like flash drives or ink pens. Some vape devices imitate traditional smoking products such as cigarettes or cigars. Vape products often contain a battery, a heating element, a cartridge or "pod" that contains the e-liquid, and a piece for the user to put their mouth on. The power source, often a battery or rechargeable mechanism, heats the liquid when the user inhales on the mouthpiece. This produces an aerosol that's inhaled into the user's lungs and then exhaled into the air. Contrary to popular belief, this aerosol is not just water. It contains nicotine, chemicals and flavorings. When users inhale the aerosol into their lungs, they're absorbing these substances into their body.

Is vaping bad for you? The answer is yes.

Not only is the nicotine in vape products addictive, but users are ingesting dangerous chemicals that cause lung damage. These chemicals can irritate pre-existing conditions such as asthma. There are several reasons why vaping is bad for you.

Aerosol produces dangerous primary and secondhand emissions. Vaping is often appealing to users because there's no cloud of smoke created by traditional cigarettes. Yet the aerosol produced by vaping is filled with dangerous chemicals that are harmful to users and those who inhale it secondhand.

Brain development slows with nicotine. Nicotine can cause permanent changes to a child's developing brain. Changes in mood and impulse control may be permanently affected by vaping.

Chemicals are in e-liquids. Vape liquids contain chemicals and toxins like traditional cigarettes. The chemicals in e-liquids or cartridges such as formaldehyde, the herbicide acrolein, heavy metals and glycols can cause long-term lung damage. They also cause conditions such as lung cancer, asthma and lung injury.

Future tobacco or drug use. Many young people who begin vaping often move on to other forms of tobacco or drugs.

Nicotine is a stimulant. Nicotine causes increased heart rate and high blood pressure. This can lead to heart attack, stroke and cardiac illness.

Vaping is bad for mental health

Nicotine withdrawal can cause a variety of mental health issues. Since users are consuming high amounts of nicotine while vaping, they often become addicted. When the brain doesn't get the nicotine it craves, symptoms of withdrawal begin. Long-term use of nicotine from vape products creates a greater risk for depression, anxiety and irritability. Many young people may begin vaping as a way of coping with feelings of stress or depression. Yet symptoms of nicotine withdrawal often include problems sleeping and concentrating. A lack of sleep can make mental health conditions worse. When it comes to mental health, vaping can create a dangerous cycle. Initially used to manage unwelcome feelings, young people may become addicted to the nicotine in vape products which makes them feel worse.

Flavors target young people

Currently, there are more than 15,000 flavored vape products on the market today. Flavors such as cotton candy, blueberry cake and tropical fruit swap the ashy taste of cigarettes for something more appealing. Advertisements for flavored products are featured on youth -oriented television and in magazines. According to the American Journal of Health Behavior, 84 percent of young people who vape began with a flavored product. The flavors in vape products contribute to:

- Further exposure to chemicals because flavoring liquid also contains toxins
- Greater numbers of young people trying and becoming addicted to vaping
- Marketing that targets minority communities and youths

How to talk to your kids about vaping

Talking to your children about vaping and tobacco products is important. Young people see advertisements or news stories about these topics often. This can be a helpful way to open the conversation or gauge their feelings on the topic. It's important to have these conversations more than once. Your child's understanding of or feelings about the topic can change over time. If your children are asking if vaping is bad for them, and you aren't sure how to begin the conversation, here are a few suggestions.

- Skip the lecture. It may be tempting to share all the facts and dangers of vaping with your children. However, be open-minded and ready to listen.
- Focus on health. Keep the conversation focused on how vaping impacts your child's health.
- Ask open-ended questions. First, it's important to understand what your child knows about vaping and tobacco use. Asking what they think about it, answering their questions and providing safety information is a good place to start.
- What if they're already vaping? If you find out your child has tried vaping or is actively vaping, try to understand why. What made them start? What do they like (or not like) about vaping?
- Set house rules and stick to them. Let your child know what the family's expectations and house rules are. Clearly explain the consequences of breaking these rules and then make sure to stick to them.

Remember to be a resource, engage your children in healthy activities, especially those that help manage mental health. Be the example—if you smoke or vape, it might be a good time to quit.

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Suffolk County Social Host Law

What is the Social Host Law?

The primary purpose of the Social Host Law is to deter underage drinking parties or gatherings where adults knowingly allow minors to drink alcohol or alcoholic beverages. The law applies to any adults (including parents) who are over the age of 18 and knowingly allow consumption of alcohol by minors (any person under the age of 21).

Why is this law needed?

This law provides a legal basis for holding adults responsible for knowingly allowing parties for individuals under the age of 21 to occur at a place under their control, whether or not they provide the alcohol.

Who can be charged?

- Anyone who is over the age of 18; and
- Owns, rents, or otherwise controls a private residence; or a permanent or temporary domicile, including a home, apartment, condominium, cooperative unit, trailer home, recreational vehicle, mobile home, overnight accommodations at a hotel, motel, campsite or short-term rental property; or other dwelling unit of any kind, including yards and open areas adjacent to these locations;
- Knowingly allows the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by any minor on such premises; or
- Fails to take reasonable corrective action upon learning of the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by any minor on such premises.

What is "Reasonable Corrective Action?"

Reasonable corrective actions shall include, but are not be limited to:

- Making a prompt demand that the minor(s) stop drinking the alcoholic beverage or leave the premises; and
- If the minor refuses to comply with the request, the adult must promptly report the underage drinking to: Local law enforcement; or any other person with greater degree of authority over the minor (e.g. the minors' parents or guardians, etc.)

What are the penalties?

- 1st Offense: Fine not to exceed $500
- 2nd and subsequent offenses: Misdemeanor—fine up to $1,000 and/ or a term of imprisonment not to exceed one year

Emergency Hotline Numbers

Counseling & Support
YMCA Family Services- Runaway
631-665-4255
Islip Youth Bureau 631-224-5320
LI Gay & Lesbian Youth 631-665-2300

Substance Abuse Services
Family Service League 631-647-3100
Outreach House II (Teens)
631-231-3232

Victim's Services
NYS Child Abuse Reporting Hotline
800-342-3270
Victim's Information Bureau
(Domestic Violence, Rape, Sexual Assault)
631-360-3606

Emotional Crisis
Response Hotline (Crisis Counseling)
631-751-7500
Suffolk County Mental Health Hotline
631-952-3333

Other Services
Eating Disorder Association Hotline
800-931-2237
Poison Control 800-222-1222
Heat Emergencies 631-854-9935