

DEA Warns of Brightly-Colored Fentanyl Used to Target Young Americans



Rainbow fentanyl—fentanyl pills and powder that come in a variety of bright colors, shapes, and sizes

WASHINGTON – The Drug Enforcement Administration is advising the public of an alarming emerging trend of colorful fentanyl available across the United States. Since August 2022, DEA and our law enforcement partners seized brightly-colored fentanyl and fentanyl pills in 26 states. Dubbed “rainbow fentanyl” in the media, this trend appears to be a new method used by drug cartels to sell highly addictive and potentially deadly fentanyl made to look like candy to children and young people.

“Rainbow fentanyl—fentanyl pills and powder that come in a variety of bright colors, shapes, and sizes—is a deliberate effort by drug traffickers to drive addiction amongst kids and young adults,” said DEA Administrator Anne

Milgram. "The men and women of the DEA are relentlessly working to stop the trafficking of rainbow fentanyl and defeat the Mexican drug cartels that are responsible for the vast majority of the fentanyl that is being trafficked in the United States."

Brightly-colored fentanyl is being seized in multiple forms, including pills, powder, and blocks that resembles sidewalk chalk. Despite claims that certain colors may be more potent than others, there is no indication through DEA's laboratory testing that this is the case. Every color, shape, and size of fentanyl should be considered extremely dangerous.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. Just two milligrams of fentanyl, which is equal to 10-15 grains of table salt, is considered a lethal dose. Without laboratory testing, there is no way to know how much fentanyl is concentrated in a pill or powder.

Fentanyl remains the deadliest drug threat facing this country. According to the CDC, 107,622 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021, with 66 percent of those deaths related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Drug poisonings are the leading killer of Americans between the ages of 18 and 45. Fentanyl available in the United States is primarily supplied by two criminal drug networks, the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG).

In September 2021, DEA launched the [One Pill Can Kill Public Awareness Campaign](#) to educate Americans about the dangers of fake pills. Additional resources for parents and the community can be found on DEA's [Fentanyl Awareness](#) page.

If you encounter fentanyl in any form, do not handle it and call 911 immediately.

###

This press release was updated on 10/12/2022 to reflect the increase of the number of states where DEA has seized rainbow fentanyl from 18 to 26