

Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of frequently asked questions about DHCS' distribution of fentanyl test strips.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Fentanyl Test Strip Overview

1. What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Fentanyl is a major contributor to fatal and nonfatal overdoses in California and the United States.

There are two types of fentanyl: 1) pharmaceutical fentanyl and 2) illicitly manufactured fentanyl (illicit fentanyl or IMF). Doctors prescribe pharmaceutical fentanyl to treat severe pain, such as while in the hospital for and after surgery or for advanced-stage cancer. Illicit fentanyl is unregulated and distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect.

2. Why is fentanyl dangerous?

Fentanyl is extremely potent relative to other opioids and can more rapidly cause respiratory depression and arrest. Illicit fentanyl can be added to other drugs to make them cheaper, more powerful, and more addictive. People who use drugs may be unaware if their drugs contain fentanyl. A very small amount of fentanyl can be deadly and the amount of fentanyl in substances varies dramatically. This can lead to a life-threatening or fatal overdose event.

3. What are fentanyl test strips?

Fentanyl test strips are small strips of paper that can detect the presence of fentanyl in different drugs (such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin) and drug forms (pills, powder, and injectables).

4. How long can fentanyl test strips be stored?

Fentanyl test strips received from DHCS can last one to two years. Specific shelf life details are provided directly on the fentanyl test strip kits.

5. How should fentanyl test strips be stored?

Keep fentanyl test strips out of light and store them in a temperature range of 35.6°F to 86°F. This specific temperature range is required to preserve their accuracy and effectiveness.

6. Can fentanyl test strips be used to test urine?

Fentanyl test strips are not intended to be used for urine testing. They are designed to test the drug supply prior to ingestion.

7. Are there trainings and resources available to learn how to use fentanyl test strips?

This [fentanyl test strips flyer](#) has additional information on the fentanyl test strips distributed by DHCS.

8. Are fentanyl test strips accurate and reliable?

A [study](#) from 2018 found that fentanyl test strips were accurate at detecting fentanyl when it was present in samples of street drugs obtained by law enforcement. This same study found that fentanyl test strips are unlikely to produce false negative results.

Applying to Receive Fentanyl Test Strips from DHCS

1. How can entities in California apply for fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

To request free fentanyl test strips, complete the online application located on the [DHCS website](#). The application includes instructions, as well as terms and conditions of receiving fentanyl test strips from DHCS. In addition to filling out the application form and agreeing to the terms and conditions, organizations must also provide:

- a. A copy of a valid and active business license, FEIN number or tax-exempt letter.
- b. If the fentanyl test strips request is for more than 4,000 units, provide a comprehensive summary explaining why the quantity was requested and a document of policies and procedures for fentanyl test strips distribution including:
 - i. Storage of fentanyl test strips received from DHCS;
 - ii. Inventory and tracking of fentanyl test strips received from DHCS; and
 - iii. A distribution plan for fentanyl test strips received from DHCS.
- c. Number of fentanyl test strips from previous order that have been distributed (for subsequent applications).

If your organization is a Substance Use Recovery Facility (outpatient, residential), you must include a copy of the program's DHCS license and/or certification, if applicable.

Submit the application and supplemental information via the [online application form](#). Applications that fail to submit all required documentation will be deemed incomplete and may result in application denial.

2. Can entities apply for fentanyl test strips and naloxone through the same online application form on the Naloxone Distribution Project website?

Yes, entities can use the Naloxone Distribution Project's [online application form](#) to apply for fentanyl test strips and/or naloxone.

3. Can I apply on behalf of another program?

No. Eligible entities must apply directly to DHCS for their program.

4. Can organizations apply for additional supplies of fentanyl test strips?

Yes. You may request more fentanyl test strips by submitting a new application to DHCS via the [online application form](#). Prior approval does not guarantee automatic approval on subsequent requests for additional fentanyl test strips.

Eligibility for Fentanyl Test Strips

1. What types of organizations are eligible to apply for fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

DHCS provides free fentanyl test strips to eligible entities, including:

- Community organizations
- County health agencies
- Community clinics or federally qualified health centers
- Emergency departments or hospitals
- Emergency medical services
- Fire authorities
- First responders
- Law enforcement, courts, and criminal justice partners*
- Libraries
- Local city agencies
- Organizations that provide services to unhoused individuals/community
- Religious organizations
- Schools and universities
- Substance use recovery facilities
- Veteran organizations
- Tribal entities

*Please note that entities may only use fentanyl test strips from DHCS for distribution purposes, and may not use fentanyl test strips for testing the drug supply in criminal justice processes.

If you have a question about whether your organization is eligible to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS, please email naloxone@dhcs.ca.gov.

DHCS does not distribute fentanyl test strips directly to individuals. Some community organizations and other entities listed above may offer fentanyl test strips at low or no cost to individuals. Fentanyl test strips received from DHCS may not be resold.

2. Can federal agencies to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

No. Only state, local, and tribal agencies in the state of California are eligible to apply for fentanyl test strips from DHCS.

3. Can county public health and behavioral health agencies apply to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

Yes, county public health and behavioral health agencies may apply to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS.

County agency applications that include eligible sub-recipients (e.g., law enforcement, homeless shelters, or community clinics) are typically not approved. DHCS recommends sub-recipients directly apply for their fentanyl test strip needs. This is so that DHCS can collect accurate data regarding fentanyl test strip distribution. If an agency has a need to apply with sub-recipients, please include a detailed distribution plan that includes fentanyl test strip allotments to each entity with the application to DHCS.

4. Can hospital emergency departments apply to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

Yes. Hospital emergency departments are eligible entities to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS.

5. Can substance use disorder recovery facilities apply to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

Yes. Substance use disorder (SUD) recovery facilities (outpatient, residential) are eligible entities to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS and may have fentanyl test strips onsite.

SUD recovery facilities should provide a copy of the program's DHCS license and/or certification, if applicable.

Cost & Ordering

1. How much does it cost to obtain fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

The product is free and is shipped directly to approved applicants.

2. What is the minimum order that I can request?

There is a minimum of 500 fentanyl test strips per application.

3. What is the maximum order that I can request?

The maximum that an entity can request is 25,000 fentanyl test strips per application. The maximum request is determined by DHCS' ability to meet projected demand with available funding and is subject to change.

4. Do I have to order fentanyl test strips in multiples of 500?

Yes, applicants must order in multiples of 500.

Fentanyl Test Strip Shipment

1. Is it acceptable to include a P.O. box as the mailing address?

No. Fentanyl test strips cannot be delivered to a P.O. box.

2. Once an application is approved, how long does the applicant have to wait to receive the shipment?

DHCS will contact you via email within 2-4 weeks of the date of application submission and confirm if your request has been approved or denied. The shipment will be mailed within 1-2 weeks of the date of approval of the application.

3. What should I do if there are issues with my fentanyl test strips shipment?

Please direct all questions regarding the product or shipment of fentanyl test strips to hello@doctest.com. Please direct any questions regarding the application process to DHCS at naloxone@dhcs.ca.gov.

Guidelines for Fentanyl Test Strips from DHCS

1. Can recipients of fentanyl test strips from DHCS ship the fentanyl test strips out of state?

No. Fentanyl test strips received from DHCS must be distributed to individuals within the state of California.

2. Are entities that receive free fentanyl test strips from DHCS permitted to sell fentanyl test strips?

No. The product may only be used by the applicant and may not be submitted for reimbursement of any type, including and not limited to, private pay, commercial, government authority, agency, or otherwise.

3. Can I return the product?

No, applicants cannot return shipments.

Data Reporting Requirements

1. What are data reporting requirements for entities receiving fentanyl test strips from DHCS?

Entities receiving fentanyl test strips from DHCS agree to maintain and report information regarding the number of fentanyl test strips distributed from DHCS. Please submit the total number of fentanyl test strips distributed from the previous shipment of fentanyl test strips that your organization received from DHCS. You can submit this information in subsequent applications to DHCS via the [online application form](#). If you are unable to include previous distribution information in a subsequent application, applicants can email naloxone@dhcs.ca.gov to report the number of fentanyl test strips distributed. Entities that are re-applying to receive fentanyl test strips from DHCS are required to submit this information.

Alternative Sources for Fentanyl Test Strips

1. What are some alternate sources for fentanyl test strips?

Free or low-cost fentanyl test strips are also available to individuals at California's [syringe services programs](#) (SSPs) through the California Harm Reduction Supply Clearinghouse. Fentanyl test strips can also be purchased directly from manufacturers.

2. Where else can entities find harm reduction materials?

Hospitals and emergency departments looking to participate in Physician Lead Syringe Exchange should reach out to the [California Department of Public Health](#) at SSPinfo@cdph.ca.gov.

The Harm Reduction Supply Clearinghouse also provides other materials to SSPs, including needles and syringes, containers for mixing injectable drugs (cookers), glass pipes, tourniquets, and condoms. For more information on supplies currently offered by the Clearinghouse, contact SSPinfo@cdph.ca.gov.