

Fentanyl-Laced Marijuana Use in Adolescents: A Rising Concern Nationwide

According to a report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of deaths involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl has grown in recent years, with young people being among the most affected.¹ In addition, prescription drugs or fentanyl-laced marijuana are the most common ways of initiation.¹

Fentanyl-laced marijuana has been recovered from across the United States.^{2,3} There are now reports of school children intoxicated with fentanyl when using marijuana.⁴ A small dose of fentanyl, such as 700 µg, can cause death in children.⁴

Combining fentanyl and marijuana can have severe drug-to-drug interactions and potentially life-threatening consequences. Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid that can cause respiratory depression, while marijuana can have sedative effects and impair cognitive function. The combination of these drugs can also cause extreme drowsiness,

confusion, and impaired coordination, increasing the risk of accidents and injuries.⁵ In addition, the drug-to-drug interaction between fentanyl and marijuana is not fully understood.⁶

Overall, the available data suggest that fentanyl-laced marijuana use is a serious and growing concern for adolescents and young adults and highlights the need for increased awareness, prevention efforts, and treatment options to address this issue.⁶

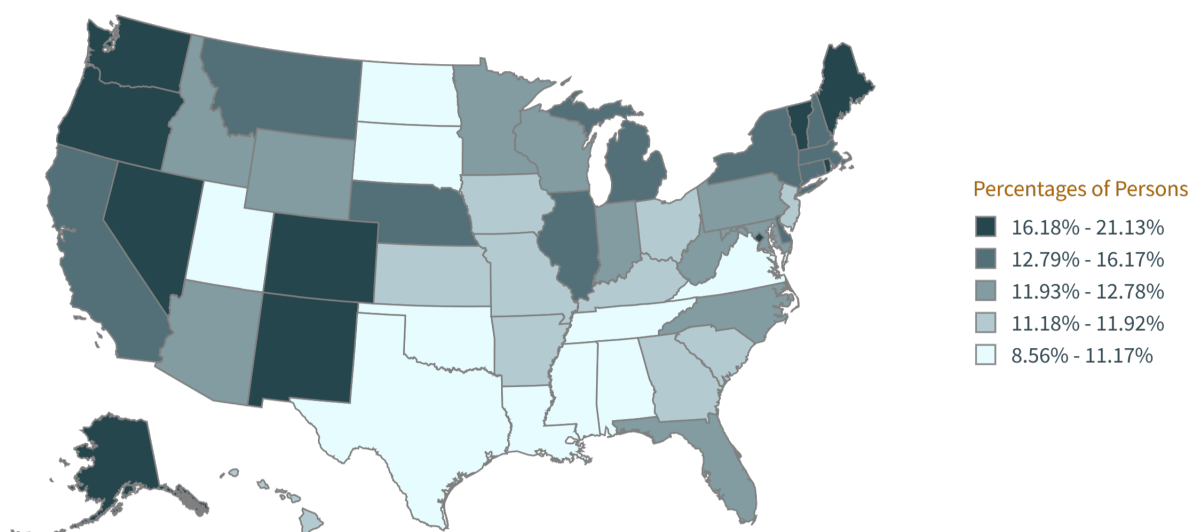
Figure 1 guides us on the prevalence of marijuana users, which can help health policy makers to identify the areas with most concern and more needs.⁷ Figure 2 shows the upward trend in prevalence of marijuana users. There is an increasing need for mental health and addiction services to match this growing problem.⁷

We can take several possible prevention and policy measures to limit the lacing of fentanyl with marijuana including the following:

1. **Public Health Campaigns:** Education and awareness campaigns to raise awareness of the risks and dangers of fentanyl-laced marijuana use can help prevent individuals from using these drugs together.
2. **Parental Involvement:** Parents can play a critical role in preventing fentanyl-laced marijuana use in adolescents by monitoring their children's behavior, talking to them about the dangers of drug use, and seeking professional help if necessary.
3. **Increased Surveillance:** Law enforcement agencies can increase surveillance and monitoring of the drug supply chain to detect and prevent the distribution of fentanyl-laced marijuana.
4. **Regulatory Measures:** Regulating the labeling, production, sale, and distribution of marijuana products can

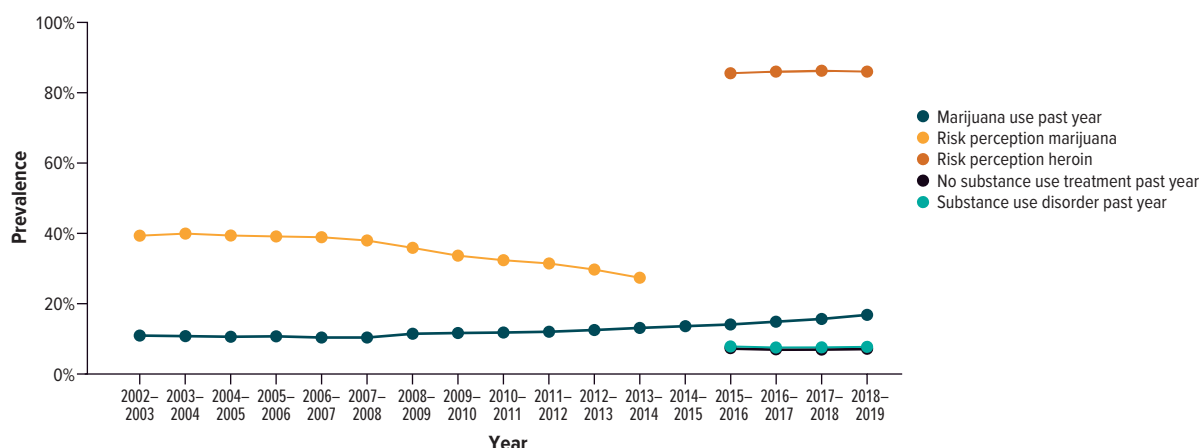
Figure 1.

Marijuana Use Among Youths Aged 12 to 17 by State: 2018–2019^a



^aData from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.⁷

Figure 2.

Prevalence of Marijuana Use Among Individuals Aged ≥ 12 in the United States by Outcome^a

^aData from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.⁷

help prevent the lacing of fentanyl and other dangerous substances with marijuana.

5. Drug Testing: Regular drug testing of marijuana products can help detect and prevent the distribution of fentanyl-laced marijuana.
6. Harm Reduction Strategies: Harm reduction strategies, such as providing naloxone and other opioid overdose reversal drugs, can help prevent fatal overdoses in individuals who use fentanyl-laced marijuana.
7. Access to Treatment and Support: Adolescents struggling with substance abuse and addiction should have access to treatment and support services, including counseling, medication-assisted treatment, and peer support groups. These services can help reduce relapse risk and promote long-term recovery.
8. International Cooperation: International cooperation and collaboration can help prevent the trafficking of fentanyl-laced marijuana across borders and reduce the availability of these drugs.

Overall, a multifaceted approach that includes a combination of prevention, treatment, and regulatory measures can help limit the lacing of fentanyl with marijuana and prevent the adverse health outcomes associated with its use.

Sahar Ashraf, MD
Kaushal Shah, MD
Mohsin Ali, MD
Shailesh Jain, MD

Article Information

Published Online: February 6, 2024.
<https://doi.org/10.4088/PCC.23lr03598>

© 2024 Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc.

Prim Care Companion CNS Disord 2024;26(1):23lr03598

To Cite: Ashraf S, Shah K, Ali M, et al. Fentanyl-laced marijuana use in adolescents: a rising concern nationwide. *Prim Care Companion CNS Disord*. 2024;26(1):23lr03598.

Author Affiliations: Texas Tech University Health Science Center, Permian Basin (Ashraf, Jain); Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Shah); King Edward Medical University, Lahore, Pakistan (Ali).

Author Information: Dr Jain is the senior author.

Corresponding Author: Sahar Ashraf, MD, NorthPointe Psychiatry, 860 Hebron Pkwy, Ste 1101 Lewisville, TX 75057 (sahraf.1105@gmail.com).

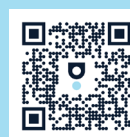
Relevant Financial Relationships: None.

Funding/Support: None.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Other Drugs. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/other-drugs.html>
2. News Channel 8 Tulsa. Fentanyl-laced marijuana discovered at camp complex in Tulsa. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://ktul.com/news/local/fentanyl-laced-marijuana-discovered-at-camp-complex-in-tulsa>
3. Live 5 WCSC. Police warn of laced marijuana after drug overdoses. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.live5news.com/2022/10/20/police-warn-laced-marijuana-after-drug-overdoses/>
4. NBCDFW. Battle Against Fentanyl Hits Collin County. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/battle-against-fentanyl-hits-collin-county/3196888/>
5. StatPearls [Internet]. Prescription of Controlled Substances: Benefits and Risks. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537318/>
6. Medical News Today. What to know about fentanyl-laced cannabis. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/fentanyl-laced-marijuana#risks>
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Interactive NSDUH State Estimates. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://datatools.samhsa.gov/saes/state>

Scan Now



Cite and Share
this article at
Psychiatrist.com