

# THE TRUTH ABOUT FENTANYL

Drop Dead

Murder 8

China White  
Poison

Lethal  
Injection

Apache

[drugfreeworld.org](http://drugfreeworld.org)

# WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

You hear a lot of talk about drugs these days—at school, in the streets, on the internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

What you may not know is that much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Former dealers have said they would tell people anything to get them to buy drugs.

You need the real facts and the truth about drugs so you can make an informed decision about them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so let us know what you think about this booklet. Visit us at [DrugFreeWorld.org](http://DrugFreeWorld.org) and email us at [info@drugfreeworld.org](mailto:info@drugfreeworld.org).

# WHAT IS FENTANYL?

Fentanyl is an extremely powerful drug that has been used for decades as a painkiller. Because of its high potential to cause addiction, it has primarily been used to relieve severe pain, such as from advanced cancer or after serious surgery.

Fentanyl is in the same class of drugs as painkillers like morphine or oxycodone and the illegal drug heroin. Those drugs, called *opioids*, are primarily products of the opium poppy. Some, like heroin and morphine, are directly derived from opium. Others, like oxycodone, are semisynthetic, meaning created in a laboratory from a natural

substance. Fentanyl is 100 percent created in a lab and fully synthetic.

No plant products are needed to make fentanyl, which means it can be created anywhere that lab chemicals can be obtained. This has made it easy for drug-trafficking organizations to manufacture it in illicit labs for distribution as a street drug. In 2013, distribution of fentanyl began skyrocketing in the United States, with resultant overdose deaths increasing from that point forward.

# HOW IS FENTANYL USED?

**A**s a pharmaceutical drug, fentanyl can be applied to the skin in a patch, administered as a very low-dosage pill or given in a lozenge, or “lollipop,” that slowly dissolves. There are also sprays used under the tongue or in the nose. Liquid fentanyl may be injected.

Any of these forms of fentanyl can be misused. Patches can be cut up and placed under the tongue or the contents squeezed out and swallowed.

Illicit forms of fentanyl are often found in fake prescription pills, any one of which may be fatal. Powdered fentanyl can be dissolved for injection or for smoking in a glass pipe. Nonpharmaceutical fentanyl

can also be added to eyedrops, nasal spray or small squares of blotter paper that users place in their mouths.

Because fentanyl can be combined with methamphetamine\* or cocaine, it may be snorted, smoked or injected, with users unaware they are taking fentanyl.

An increasing number of illegal vape products and marijuana are also being laced<sup>†</sup> with fentanyl, which can be lethal.

## WHY IS FENTANYL SO DANGEROUS?

Two factors make fentanyl dangerous and deadly. One is its incredible potency. It is as

\* methamphetamine: a dangerous drug that disrupts the nervous system, often known as *meth* or *crystal meth*

much as 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. As little as two milligrams of pure fentanyl, which is only a few grains, can be a fatal dose.

The other factor is that people may not even know they are taking fentanyl. It is often mixed with illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine. An unknowing user can unexpectedly overdose on fentanyl.

Powdered fentanyl is often pressed into fake pills that look like real prescription drugs. In 2023, law enforcement personnel in the United States seized more than 80 million counterfeit pills containing fentanyl from the black market.

+lace: to add a small amount of a substance to



# STREET NAMES

- Apache
- China Girl
- China Town
- China White
- Dance Fever
- Drop Dead
- Fetty
- Friend
- Goodfellas
- Great Bear
- He-Man
- Jackpot
- King Ivory
- Lethal Injection
- Murder 8
- Poison
- Tango & Cash
- TNT

A lethal dose  
of fentanyl

(image shown at  
200% actual size)



# FAKE PILLS: ONE PILL CAN KILL

Criminal drug networks mass-produce counterfeit pills, lacing them with fentanyl and marketing them as brand-name prescription drugs.

Fake pills gotten from a friend or bought online or through social media may contain fentanyl and can be deadly.

These pills are made to look like prescription drugs such as oxycodone (OxyContin and Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin) and psychotropic medications or stimulants (Xanax and Adderall).

Of the fentanyl-laced fake pills analyzed by the DEA,\* 7 out of 10 contained a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl.



Mold used  
to make illegal pills

\* DEA: US Drug Enforcement Administration



Real prescription  
Adderall pill



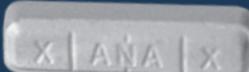
Counterfeit  
Adderall pill



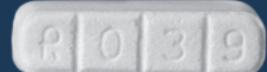
Real prescription  
oxycodone pill



Counterfeit  
oxycodone pill



Real prescription  
Xanax pill



Counterfeit  
Xanax pill

I went down to her room  
and opened up the door and  
I found her. She was standing  
upright, but she was bent over,  
down with her head on the  
couch arm and a pile of vomit.  
**When I picked her up, her  
eyes were open, and I knew  
she was dead.**"

—Mother

# HOW DOES FENTANYL KILL?

A person who overdoses on fentanyl becomes groggy and sleepy and may quickly lose consciousness. The drug affects the part of the brain that controls breathing, so the person's breathing will slow down and become difficult. They may begin to snore and make gurgling sounds, until they stop breathing altogether.

Fentanyl can also freeze the muscles of the chest, which also stops breathing. This physical response can happen immediately after ingestion of the drug.

**"I was literally flatlined, dead in my mother's living room at my mom's feet in front of my sister. And I never wanted to be in that situation."**

—Kyle

# SYMPTOMS OF FENTANYL OVERDOSE

Since even small doses of fentanyl can be fatal, recognizing the signs of an overdose can save a life.

Here are some symptoms of a fentanyl-related overdose:

- Deep sedation
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Respiratory arrest
- Blue nails and lips
- Gaspings, gurgling or snoring
- Unresponsive or unconscious
- Cold and clammy skin

# SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF FENTANYL

The danger for a person who consumes fentanyl, either intentionally or unintentionally, is that they can too easily suffer a fatal overdose—even after a single use.

- Death
- Sedation
- Confusion
- Poor physical coordination
- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Tiny pupils
- Constipation
- Headache
- Respiratory depression

**“Two years ago today, I buried my son.  
He was 29 and he took a black-market Xanax  
pill that was laced with fentanyl. He went to  
sleep and never woke up.” —Father**

# LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF FENTANYL

The most obvious long-term effect of fentanyl is addiction. Because the drug is so powerful, addiction can occur quickly. This is one of the reasons some drug dealers add fentanyl to methamphetamine or cocaine—to get their customers hooked on their drugs fast.

Dealers also mix fentanyl with other drugs because only small quantities are needed to get a user high. Adding fentanyl makes other drugs more powerful and cheaper, but also more deadly.

- **Addiction**
- **Permanent damage to respiratory system**
- **Mental fog**
- **Damage to liver and kidneys**
- **Depression, anxiety and mood swings**
- **Suppressed immune system**
- **Death**

# A SHORT HISTORY OF FENTANYL

Fentanyl was developed as a medical drug in 1959 and approved for medical use in 1968. It was first used in hospitals as an injection for severe pain or in anesthetic formulas for surgery. Because of fentanyl's addictive potential, it is

primarily prescribed only for severe pain in end-of-life care, such as with terminal cancer patients.

In the 1990s, the fentanyl patch was approved and, in 1998, fentanyl began being distributed in lozenge form. Following those releases, minor

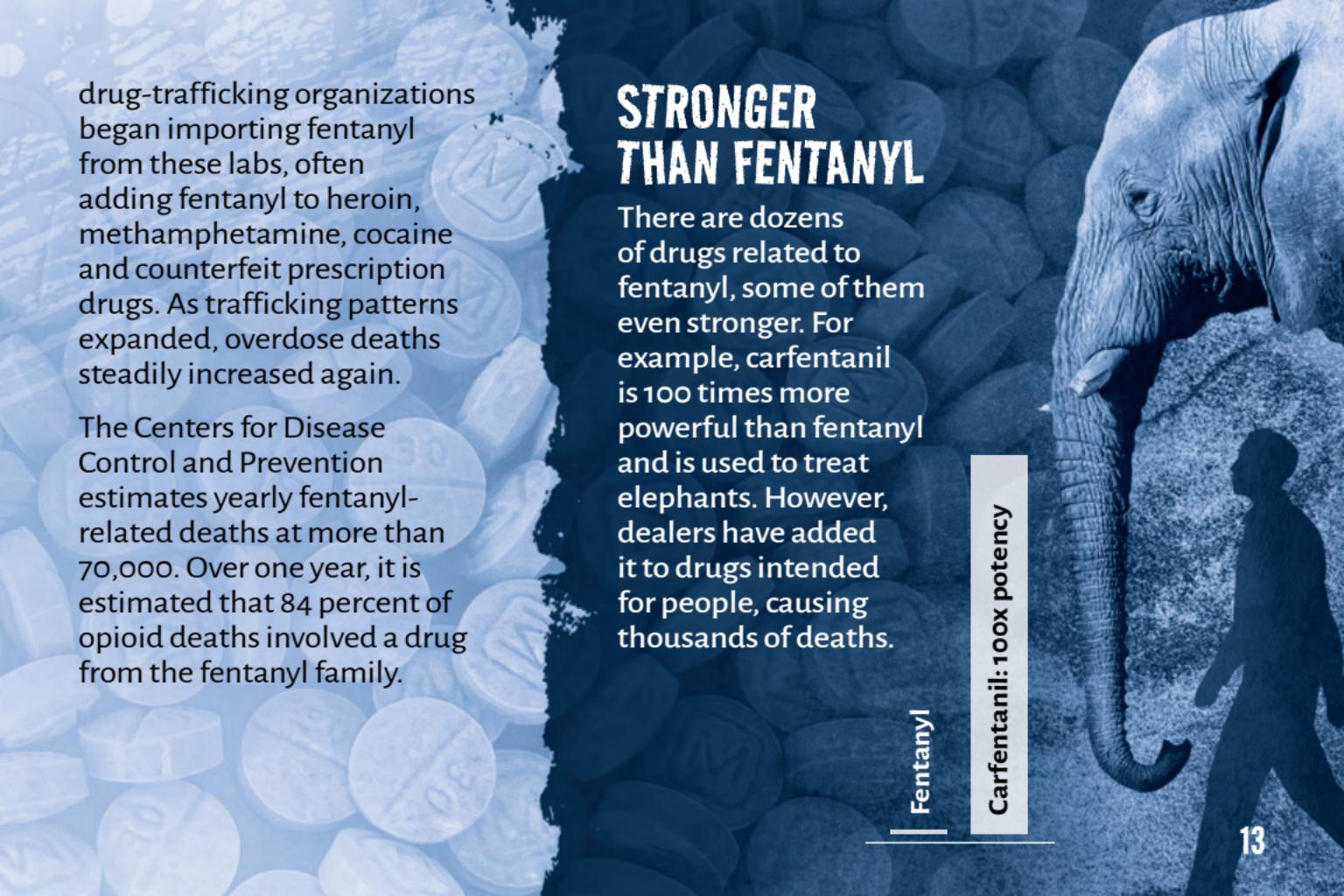
quantities of these forms were diverted from medical facilities and illegally sold on the street, resulting in a small number of overdose deaths each year.

## OVERDOSE DEATHS

In 2006, a dramatic increase in fentanyl-related overdose deaths began to be recorded in the United States. They were traced to an illicit lab in Toluca, Mexico. When this lab was closed down, the number of deaths dropped back to low levels.

Then, in 2013, deaths started increasing again as labs in Asia manufactured fentanyl in large quantities. Established





drug-trafficking organizations began importing fentanyl from these labs, often adding fentanyl to heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and counterfeit prescription drugs. As trafficking patterns expanded, overdose deaths steadily increased again.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates yearly fentanyl-related deaths at more than 70,000. Over one year, it is estimated that 84 percent of opioid deaths involved a drug from the fentanyl family.

## STRONGER THAN FENTANYL

There are dozens of drugs related to fentanyl, some of them even stronger. For example, carfentanil is 100 times more powerful than fentanyl and is used to treat elephants. However, dealers have added it to drugs intended for people, causing thousands of deaths.

Fentanyl

Carfentanil: 100x potency

# FENTANYL DEATHS: A CATASTROPHIC EPIDEMIC

The impact of fentanyl has been the most tragic in the United States where, in one year, two out of every three drug overdose deaths were caused by fentanyl.

In April 2021, the total number of overdose deaths over a 12-month period reached 100,000 for the first time, with fentanyl as the main cause.

In Canada during the first half of 2022, 76 percent of opioid-related overdose deaths involved fentanyl or a fentanyl-like substance. Total opioid deaths nearly doubled in just a few years.

In Europe, 13 countries reported fentanyl-related deaths, including Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom and Finland.



ZACHARIAH  
FOREVER 17



ISSAIAH  
FOREVER 15



AVA  
FOREVER 24



AMANDA  
FOREVER 28

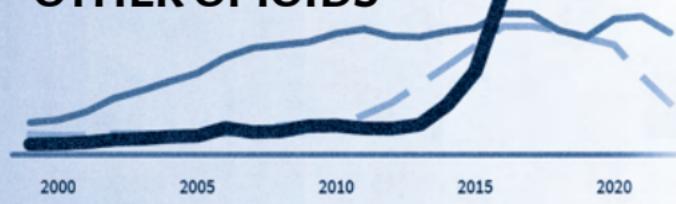


JAMES  
FOREVER 34



7 out of 10 pills sold on the black market that contain fentanyl hold a potentially lethal dose.

## US FENTANYL OVERDOSE DEATHS COMPARED TO OTHER OPIOIDS



# WHO WE LOST TO FENTANYL

**Prince:** The music icon died from an accidental overdose of self-administered fentanyl.

**Mac Miller:** At the age of 26, the rapper and producer died from a combination of cocaine, alcohol and fentanyl.

**Tom Petty:** The singer-songwriter overdosed on a fatal mix of fentanyl, oxycodone, Xanax and other substances.

**Lexii Alijai:** The 21-year-old rapper-singer-songwriter died from a fentanyl and alcohol overdose.

**Tyler Sanders:** The young actor had a history of illicit drug abuse before he overdosed on fentanyl at 18.

**Angus Cloud:** Famous as “Fez” on *Euphoria*, the actor died at 25 from a cocktail of illicit drugs including fentanyl.

**Jordan Cashmyer:** The reality TV personality was 26 when she died of an overdose of fentanyl and cocaine.

**Jimmy Hayes:** The 31-year-old National Hockey League star’s death was caused by fentanyl and cocaine toxicity.

**Jaylon Ferguson:** His NFL career was cut short at 26 when he overdosed on fentanyl and cocaine.

**Tyler Skaggs:** Baseball player

**Coolio:** Hip-hop legend

**Shock G:** US rapper

**Luke Bell:** Country music singer

**Logan Williams:** Actor

**Daniel Mickelson:** Actor

**Michael K. Williams:** Actor

**Frank Vallelonga Jr.:** Actor

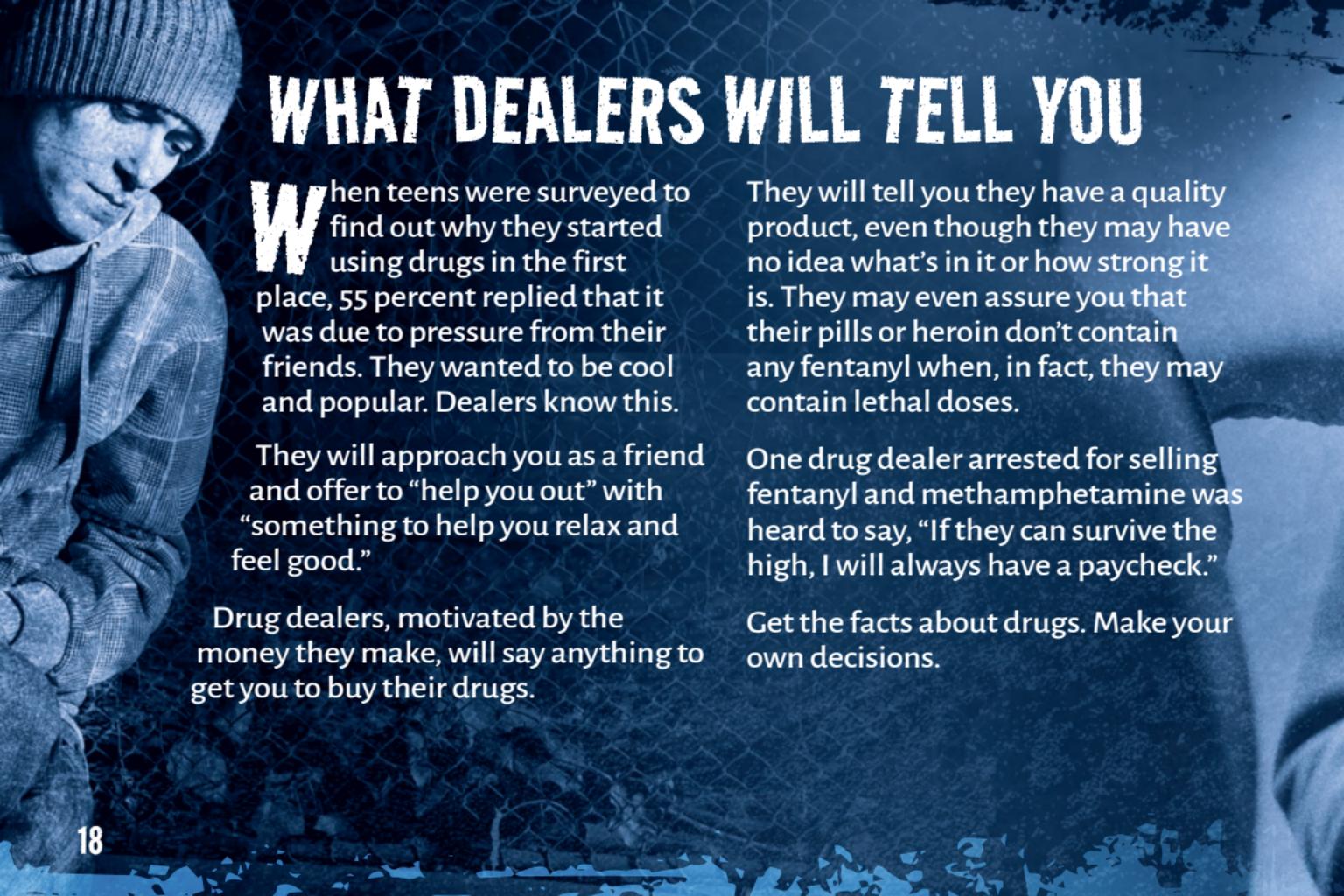
**PRINCE**

**TOM PETTY**



**MAC MILLER**





# WHAT DEALERS WILL TELL YOU

**W**hen teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55 percent replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

They will approach you as a friend and offer to “help you out” with “something to help you relax and feel good.”

Drug dealers, motivated by the money they make, will say anything to get you to buy their drugs.

They will tell you they have a quality product, even though they may have no idea what's in it or how strong it is. They may even assure you that their pills or heroin don't contain any fentanyl when, in fact, they may contain lethal doses.

One drug dealer arrested for selling fentanyl and methamphetamine was heard to say, “If they can survive the high, I will always have a paycheck.”

Get the facts about drugs. Make your own decisions.

**"I could literally take the smallest grain that you could see with your eye and that would be a dose.  
I started taking that around and giving it to people  
and it just blew up my reputation."**

—Sim (who sold fentanyl before getting arrested)



An illegal fentanyl pill mill

# The Truth About Drugs

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones along with the undesirable. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up, slow down or change something about the way your body is working to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

**The real answer is to get  
the facts and to not take  
drugs in the first place.**



## WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown-up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.



## **Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in over 20 languages.**

As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.



### **REFERENCES:**

For the references used to compile this booklet, go to [DrugFreeWorld.org/refs](http://DrugFreeWorld.org/refs).

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# FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW



This booklet is one in a series of publications that covers the facts about marijuana, alcohol, fentanyl, synthetic drugs, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.

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