

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH)
Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS)
Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS) in Massachusetts: FAQs for Providers

Is FTS distribution supported by the federal and/or state government?

- Including FTS as a harm reduction strategy was recommended by the MA Harm Reduction Commission in 2019:
 - <https://www.mass.gov/lists/harm-reduction-commission-report>
- The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) approved federal grantees to use funds for the purchase of FTS in April of 2021.
 - Please see the press release here:<https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202104070200>
- Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) circulated a memo to DPH contracted/licensed vendors in October of 2021 to offer additional guidance and instructions for vendors looking to purchase FTS (attached).
- FTS are part of a larger drug checking strategy supported by MDPH. Learn more about MDPH supported drug checking efforts here:
 - <https://heller.brandeis.edu/opioid-policy/community-resources/madds/drug-checking-resources.html>

Are FTS FDA approved and/or CLIA waived?

- The CLIA process is for testing human specimens for health assessments. FTS as used in public health for fentanyl detection are not testing human specimens.
- FTS are neither FDA approved nor CLIA waived for the detection of fentanyl in illicit substances by testing a sample of product diluted with water.
- CLIA is a process on top of an FDA approved device--it signifies that the test is simple to administer and has low risk for erroneous results. Only FDA confers the CLIA waiver status.
- FTS are not CLIA-waived because they are not FDA approved for the detection of fentanyl in urine in the US either for clinical or for forensic purposes.
- FTS are approved elsewhere in the world for fentanyl detection in urine.

Are there any exposure risks around handling products for testing using FTS?

- Contact with fentanyl during routine health, public safety, or social service interactions does not lead to overdose and does not require additional precautions.
- Fentanyl and its analogs are not readily absorbed through skin or clothing.
- Toxicity through inhalation may only result from very prolonged exposure in enclosed areas.
- Washing hands with soap and water is best practice after any handling of products and is a good hygiene practice for anyone.

Where can I order FTS?

- Massachusetts has recently (August 2023) launched a no-cost pathway to ordering FTS through the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse.
- The link to order FTS is:
 - <https://massclearinghouse.ehs.state.ma.us/PROG-BSAS-SBIRT/SA5844kit.html>
- There is a limit of 500 FTS per order.

How do I use the FTS?

- All FTS ordered through the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse come with an informational wallet card that provides instructions.
- Please always defer to the instructions on the DPH-approved wallet card rather than any instructions that may be on the FTS packaging.
- The DPH-approved wallet card contents were developed by local experts and represent current best practice and application.
- The wallet card is double-sided with English language instructions on one side, and Spanish language instructions on the other.

In summation:

- FTS are an engagement and consumer safety harm reduction strategy supported by state and federal funders.
- FTS obtained from the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse are intended to be used off-label to test for the presence of fentanyl in illicit substances by following the wallet card instructions to dilute a small amount of the product of interest with water.
- FTS obtained from the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse are not intended to be used for urine testing.
- FTS should not be used for the purposes of diagnosing patients, making treatment decisions, and are not appropriate tools for forensic/law enforcement purposes.
- Drug checking using FTS does not provide a guarantee of safety and does not provide evidence of purity or dose. People respond differently to drugs and drug checking using FTS does not provide personalized information about how anyone else will respond.
- The information received is not an endorsement of a drug or of how a drug is used and is provided for the public health purpose of reducing harm.

Questions / Contact Info

If you have any additional questions on this topic, please contact:

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