



# Exposure Reduction Practices for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Residue in Shelters and Housing Facilities

The information below is a summary of the guidance documents for shelter and housing facility operators, Exposure Reduction Practices for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Residue in Shelters and Housing Facilities, and Health Effects from Exposure to Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Residue. For the complete versions of this guidance please refer to (add links).

## Exposure in Housing

The use of methamphetamine or fentanyl indoors can leave residue behind and expose people to these substances. Residue means any form of methamphetamine or fentanyl leftover from use whether visible or not, including pills, powder, vapor or smoke build-up, liquid, skin patches, and drug paraphernalia. Drug residue may be left on household surfaces like furniture, as well as walls, ceilings, and floors, and even within an HVAC system.

Exposure to residue has never been reported to cause death in adults. Documented health effects where use has occurred, such as rashes and headaches, are temporary and go away once those affected leave the exposure area. Younger children have a higher risk for unintentional exposure due to more contact with household surfaces through crawling and increased hand-to-mouth behavior.

Second-hand smoke or vapor from methamphetamine or fentanyl use has not been documented to cause an overdose. However, being around any vapor or smoke is unhealthy. If someone has vaporized or smoked anything (including tobacco) in an indoor public setting, you can help reduce negative health impacts by opening windows and doors to get rid of the vapor or smoke.

## Is Decontamination Required by Law?

If you see evidence of drug manufacturing, distribution, or storage, contact your local law enforcement. You can find more information from our [Drug Lab Cleanup Program](#).

If drug use (not manufacturing or storage) is observed, contact your local health department to determine if you are required to use a contractor certified by the Washington State Department of Health for decontamination. When certified decontamination is not required, you still have the option to use a professional contractor for testing and decontamination. This guidance focuses on best practices to reduce exposures in situations where you are not required to use a certified contractor for decontamination.

## Selecting a Cleaning or Neutralizing Solution

General cleaners are useful for removing drugs from surfaces but generally do not break down the drugs. This means that the active drug may be in the wastewater or on the used wipe. Don't let wastewater dry on surfaces, as this will re-deposit drug residue on the surface if not removed. There are also neutralizing solutions that break down methamphetamine or fentanyl. However, neutralizing solutions can be difficult to use and require more personal protective equipment (PPE). Always follow label requirements for all products, including PPE, dilution, application, and how long to leave the product on before wiping off.

## How to Reduce Your Exposure to Drug Residue

Employers and employees must follow all requirements from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). If you are not an employer or employee, you can still follow L&I rules as a best practice. Here is information on the hazards of fentanyl in the workplace: [Exposure to Fentanyl Contamination in the Workplace \(wa.gov\)](#) and [How to Respond to Fentanyl Contamination as an Employer](#). Everyone should wear protective clothing such as gloves and a mask. Remember to wash your hands, don't touch your face, and do not eat or drink while cleaning drug residue.

If you find unused methamphetamine or fentanyl, contact law enforcement for information on disposal.

1. Work with building maintenance staff to turn off the HVAC, if possible, and close off the area to prevent the spread to other people. After the prewetting step, you can ventilate the area by opening windows.
2. Prewet/mist all surfaces to prevent particles from going into the air.
3. Dispose of items that will not be cleaned, particularly porous materials that are very difficult to remove drug residue from.
4. Machine wash porous materials like textiles and rugs. If not machine-washable, clean textiles by spraying cleaning solution and let sit according to label instructions to ensure the product is effective. Pressure wash then wet vacuum, if possible, or scrub the material with more cleaning solution using hot water.
5. Clean the area from top to bottom, focusing extra attention on frequently touched areas.
6. To clean other porous materials like wood and drywall, wash surfaces, rinse well, and repeat. If possible, use a wet vacuum to dry the material to reduce moisture and prevent mold growth.
7. For non-porous substances like glass and metal, wash hard surfaces and rinse well.
8. Unless you use a neutralizing solution, wet vacuum or wipe up wastewater on surfaces before it dries.
9. Follow all scrubbing of surfaces with [HEPA-equipped](#) vacuuming if possible once materials are dry. Do not vacuum with a non-HEPA vacuum.
10. HVAC systems should be cleaned by certified HVAC contractors due to physical dangers.
11. Dispose of all items, including cleaning materials and PPE according to local waste regulations.

If you have the means to renovate your space, it is important to consider what you can do to make future cleaning easier and cheaper. Replacing nonporous building materials, like replacing carpet with hard flooring (sheet, laminate, or vinyl tile) can help in any future cleaning processes.



### Program contact info

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