



This resource was adapted from [Common Cuts and Buffs found in drugs using FTIR](#) from the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU). For more information, please visit [streetcheck.org](http://streetcheck.org) or email [madds@brandeis.edu](mailto:madds@brandeis.edu).

### Common Active Cuts Found in Opioids & Stimulants Using FTIR

| Substance  | What is it?  | What does it do?  |
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| <b>Acetaminophen</b>   | - An analgesic used to treat fever and mild to moderate pain.  | - Generally regarded as safe (daily limit: 3 - 4 g) but higher doses can cause toxicity/liver failure.  |
| <b>Caffeine</b>  | - A natural stimulant, when taken in high doses or for long periods of time, can cause nausea, headaches, restlessness, insomnia, and anxiety.   | - Used to make heroin and fentanyl easier to smoke as it helps vaporize the drug.<br>- Adds weight to bulk out the size of potent drugs.  |
| <b>Diphenhydramine</b>   | - An antihistamine often used to treat allergic reactions and cut into other substances.   | - Has a sedating effect and in overdose, can cause sedation, abnormal heart rhythms, confusion, seizures, low blood pressure, coma, and death.  |
| <b>Etizolam and other benzodiazepines</b><br>(flualprazolam, clonazepam, bromazepam, etc)  | - CNS-depressant drugs used to treat people with anxiety disorders, panic attacks, sleep disorders, or seizure disorders.<br>- May cause prolonged sedation, blackouts, or memory loss when taken in high amounts.   | - Benzos might be added to heighten or prolong the effect of opioids.<br>- When present in opioids, they increase the risk of overdose.   |
| <b>Fentanyl</b>  | - Highly potent, synthetic opioid (manufactured).<br>- Combining fentanyl with stimulants on purpose or by accident increases the risk of overdose.<br>- Starting materials for making fentanyl (precursors-like 4-ANPP), chemicals leftover along the way (intermediaries-like acetylfentanyl and other impurities (like ethyl 4-ANPP) may show up in the lab results but few are active (like acetylfentanyl). | - May slow or stop breathing, cause unresponsiveness, or decreased consciousness.<br>- Has been seen in cocaine powder/rock forms as a contaminant and sometimes thought mistakenly by consumers to be cocaine/crack.<br>- Many precursors and impurities of fentanyl in a sample typically have no harmful effects. They just indicate poor/incomplete synthesis of fentanyl.  |
| <b>Fentanyl Analogues</b><br>(Para-fluorofentanyl, acetylfentanyl, butyrfentanyl, furanyl fentanyl, valerylfentanyl, carfentanil, etc) | - Chemical “cousins” of fentanyl that can have unknown strength or potency, ranging from weak (acetylfentanyl), some are very strong (carfentanil), and some are similar in potency to fentanyl but have some toxic effects to watch out for (para-fluorofentanyl).  | - Little is known about the strength or effects of some fentanyl analogues.<br>- More potent fentanyl analogues (like carfentanil) and analogues that are more toxic than fentanyl (like para-fluorofentanyl) can shut down breathing and lead to overdose very, very quickly.<br>- Drug checking with FTIR may not be able to detect the exact type of analogue to differentiate it from fentanyl (non-analogue), especially when <5%. |
| <b>Gabapentin</b>  | - An anticonvulsant medication frequently used to treat neuropathic or chronic pain.<br>- Has been used as an anti-epileptic and as another medicine to manage alcohol withdrawal.   | - Clinically may present with sedation. If combined with other sedating medications and/or alcohol may lead to shallow or slowed breathing.   |

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| <b>Hydroxyzine</b>            | - An antihistamine used to treat allergic reactions, but can also be helpful for anxiety and tension.   | - May increase the CNS-depressant effects of drugs and cause sedation.  |
| <b>Ketamine</b>               | - An anesthetic agent used in human and veterinary medicine.  | - May result in hallucinations, delirium, abnormal behavior, nausea or vomiting, and hypertension.<br>- Depending on the dose ketamine can cause respiratory stimulation or depression, sedation, abnormal heart rate, seizures, or abnormal heart rhythm, bladder and urinary tract problems.  |
| <b>Levamisole</b>             | - A deworming medication found in cocaine/crack due to similar appearance.<br>- May give cocaine a shiny, fresh look.                                     | - Enhances the euphoria associated with cocaine because it has amphetamine-like effects.<br>- Can cause purple skin lesions, weakened immune system, and other health problems.   |
| <b>Lidocaine</b>              | - A local anesthetic that can cause numbness.   | - In very high doses can cause heart problems and/or seizures.  |
| <b>Phenacetin</b>             | - Common active cut for cocaine due to its similar appearance to cocaine. It is also a pain reliever, similar to acetaminophen (Tylenol).                 | - Pain medication/fever reducer removed from the US and European medications market due to kidney damage/urothelial cancer risk.<br>- Prolonged use, especially among people with kidney/liver problems, can damage organs.<br>- Ingestion of a high concentration of phenacetin in drug samples may accelerate kidney or liver health concerns.  |
| <b>Procaine</b>               | - A local anesthetic that can give a numbing effect and pain relief.  | - In overdose, the main risks are cardiac, abnormal heart rhythm, and neurologic (risk of seizures).  |
| <b>Quetiapine</b>             | - An antipsychotic drug used to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.   | - Risks of overdose include low blood pressure, confusion and sedation, anticholinergic signs (blurry vision, dry mouth, sedation, confusion, tachycardia, urinary retention), and abnormal muscular activity. In large quantities, it can sometimes cause difficulty breathing.<br>- Overdose and/or chronic exposure can cause life-threatening neuromuscular changes and hyperthermia due to neuroleptic malignant syndrome in rare cases. |
| <b>Quinine</b>                | - An antimalarial drug that has been seen to be cut into other substances, due to bitter taste.   | - Can cause cardiac arrhythmias, fatigue, headache, ataxia, hepatotoxicity, and nausea.   |
| <b>Synthetic Cannabinoids</b> | - Synthetically manufactured (chemical) cannabis which has a range of strengths and provides psychoactive effects.<br>- Ex: AMB-FUBINACA, 5F-MDMB-PINACA. | - There are no medical or commercial uses for synthetic cannabinoids; side- and long-term effects are unknown.<br>- Reasons for why they appear are unknown.  |
| <b>Tramadol</b>               | - A synthetic opioid medication that is used for pain relief and can treat opioid withdrawal.   | - In addition to opioid effects it can result in seizures and serotonin toxicity.   |
| <b>Xylazine</b>               | - A long-acting, sedating chemical, not an opioid but a veterinary sedative.  | - Can cause decreased consciousness, increased unresponsiveness, low blood sugar, slowed heart rate, and reduced breathing.   |