



STIMULANTS FACT SHEET

Essential, current information on cocaine, methamphetamine, and prescription stimulants for prevention professionals in Connecticut.

59.7%

CT OVERDOSE DEATHS INVOLVING
COCAINE, 2024

+55%

RISE IN COCAINE INVOLVEMENT,
2020 TO 2024

4.9M

AMERICANS USED COCAINE IN
2025

No antidote

NALOXONE REVERSES ONLY THE
OPIOID PART

WHAT ARE STIMULANTS

Stimulants speed up the central nervous system, raising heart rate, blood pressure, energy, and alertness while producing euphoria. They include illicit drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine and prescription medications like Adderall® and Ritalin® that can be misused.

Illicit stimulants

Often contaminated with fentanyl in today's supply.

- Cocaine, in powder or crack form
- Methamphetamine (crystal meth), an extremely potent synthetic
- MDMA / Ecstasy, with stimulant and hallucinogenic effects

Prescription stimulants

Legitimate uses, with real misuse potential.

- Amphetamines (Adderall®, Dexedrine®)
- Methylphenidate (Ritalin®, Concerta®)
- Prescribed for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy
- Frequently misused as "study drugs," especially by students

COMMON STREET NAMES

Cocaine: Coke, Blow, Snow, Powder, Rock (crack).

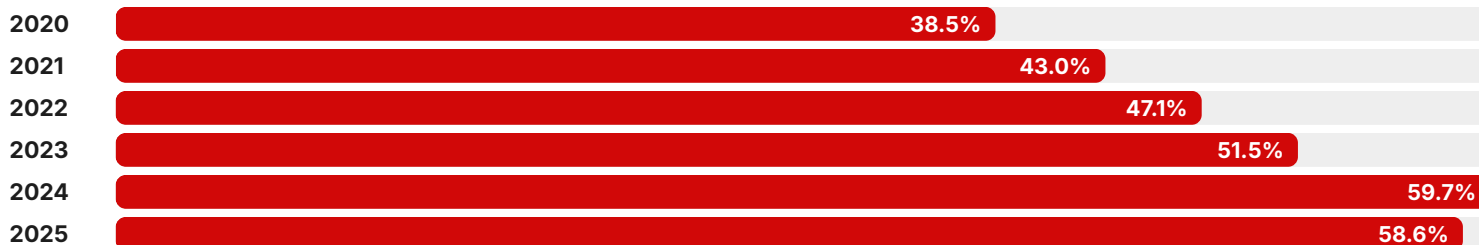
Meth: Crystal, Ice, Glass, Crank, Speed, Tina.

Prescription: Addies, Study Drugs, Smart Pills.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Even as opioid deaths fall, cocaine involvement has climbed every year. Figures are from the [Connecticut Department of Public Health \(DPH\)](#) and [Office of the Chief Medical Examiner \(OCME\)](#) for 2024; see the live [CT overdose dashboard](#).¹

- Cocaine involvement climbed from 38.5% of CT overdose deaths in 2020 to a peak of 59.7% in 2024, its highest share on record.¹
- It remains high in 2025 at 58.6%.¹
- Most cocaine-involved deaths also involve opioids, especially fentanyl.¹
- Stimulant-opioid combinations are especially deadly because naloxone reverses only the opioid component.¹



Share of CT overdose deaths involving cocaine (CT DPH / OCME, data as of May 22, 2026).

POLYSUBSTANCE USE IS THE REAL STORY

Nationally in 2024, 21,945 overdose deaths involved cocaine and 28,722 involved psychostimulants such as methamphetamine, out of 79,384 overdose deaths in all. A [CDC analysis](#) of January 2021 through June 2024 found that 59% of overdose deaths involved stimulants, and 43.1% involved stimulants and opioids together. About 4.9 million Americans used cocaine and 2.7 million used methamphetamine, while about 3.9 million misused prescription stimulants, per the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Many people are unknowingly exposed to fentanyl through contaminated stimulants. A stimulant can also mask an opioid's sedating effects, which makes it easier to take too much.²

WHAT MAKES STIMULANTS DANGEROUS

Stimulants flood the body with dopamine and norepinephrine, straining the heart, brain, and body temperature regulation. Unlike opioids, there is no reversal medication.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

- Racing heart, high blood pressure, fast breathing
- Euphoria, alertness, and energy
- Dangerously high body temperature (hyperthermia)
- Anxiety, panic, paranoia, or psychosis
- Irregular heartbeat, tremors, seizures

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Heart disease, arrhythmia, and heart failure
- Chronic meth use: "meth mouth," skin sores, weight loss
- Memory, attention, and decision-making problems
- Depression, anxiety, and psychosis
- Dependence, addiction, and higher suicide risk

CARDIOVASCULAR EMERGENCIES

Because stimulants raise heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature at once, they can trigger stroke, heart attack, and heat stroke, even in young, healthy people.

TREATMENT & RECOVERY

There are no [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#)-approved medications for stimulant use disorder, so behavioral therapies are the foundation of effective treatment ([SAMHSA](#)).⁴

CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT

The most effective approach, using tangible rewards to reinforce staying stimulant-free.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

Builds skills to manage triggers, cravings, and high-risk situations.

COMMUNITY REINFORCEMENT & MATRIX MODEL

Structured programs combining counseling, family involvement, and positive activities.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION SAVES LIVES

Because the stimulant supply is often contaminated with fentanyl, overdose prevention is essential: carry [naloxone](#), use [fentanyl test strips](#), never use alone, and cool the body during overheating. Naloxone will not reverse a pure stimulant overdose, but give it whenever opioids may be involved.³

KEY MESSAGES FOR PREVENTION PROFESSIONALS

COCAINE IS A TOP CONCERN

Cocaine climbed from 38% of CT deaths in 2020 to a peak of 60% in 2024 and remains high in 2025.

IT IS A POLYSUBSTANCE CRISIS

Most stimulant deaths involve fentanyl, often without the person's knowledge.

GIVE NALOXONE ANYWAY

It reverses only opioids, but when opioids may be involved it can still save a life.

BEHAVIORAL THERAPY WORKS

With no approved medication, contingency management and CBT are the evidence base.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION MATTERS

Fentanyl test strips, naloxone, and never using alone reduce deaths.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Reduce stigma with [person-first language](#): a person with a stimulant use disorder.

STIMULANT OVERDOSE RESPONSE

A stimulant overdose, sometimes called overamping, has no antidote, so act fast, cool the body, and get medical help. Call for help even if you are unsure.

911

CALL FIRST

Report the emergency, especially with chest pain, seizures, or unconsciousness.

Cool

LOWER BODY TEMP

Move to a cool place, remove excess clothing, and apply cool water or cloths.

Naloxone

GIVE NALOXONE

If opioids may be involved (often the case), give naloxone right away.

988

CRISIS SUPPORT

Call or text 988 for mental health and substance-use crises.

SIGNS OF A STIMULANT OVERDOSE

- Chest pain or tightness
- Very high body temperature and heavy sweating
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Severe agitation, paranoia, or psychosis
- Confusion, hallucinations, or seizures
- Loss of consciousness

STAY AND MONITOR

Keep the person calm and cool, and stay until help arrives. Connecticut's [Good Samaritan Law](#) protects those who call 911 in good faith for an overdose.

CONNECTICUT & NATIONAL RESOURCES

CT 24/7 Access Line

Referrals to treatment. Call 1-800-563-4086.

portal.ct.gov/dmhas

CONNECTICUT

Drug Free CT

Prevention resources, naloxone, and fentanyl test strips.

drugfreect.org

CONNECTICUT

DMHAS Naloxone & RBHAOs

Free naloxone and training from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and [Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations \(RBHAOs\)](#).

portal.ct.gov/dmhas

CONNECTICUT

CT Overdose Data Dashboard

Live CT overdose data from DPH, 2015 to present.

public.tableau.com (CT DPH)

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut 2-1-1

Free, confidential referral line, 24/7. Dial 2-1-1.

211ct.org

CONNECTICUT

SAMHSA National Helpline

Free 24/7 treatment referral. 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

samhsa.gov/find-help

NATIONAL

NIDA: Cocaine & Meth

Facts on cocaine and methamphetamine from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

nida.nih.gov

NATIONAL

TTASC Online Learning

On-demand courses from the Prevention Training and Technical Assistance Service Center (TTASC).

preventiontrainingcenter.org

CONNECTICUT

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

¹ [CT DPH / OCME](#), Fatal Unintentional and Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Deaths, monthly report, 2020 to April 2026 (data as of May 22, 2026); live [State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System \(SUDORS\) dashboard](#). ² [SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\), 2025](#); [CDC overdose data \(cocaine and psychostimulants\)](#); [CDC, Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Stimulants, January 2018 to June 2024](#); [CDC, Polysubstance Use Facts](#). ³ [CDC](#), fentanyl test strips and overdose prevention; contaminated stimulant supply. ⁴ [SAMHSA](#) and [NIDA](#), behavioral treatments for stimulant use disorder (contingency management, CBT). ⁵ CT [Good Samaritan Law](#); [DMHAS naloxone](#) access.



Developed by TTASC in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services. For education only, and not a substitute for professional medical advice.