

# 'Fentanyl is in everything now': CMPD calls on parents to warn kids about dangerous drug



By WSOC-TV.com News Staff

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CHARLOTTE — Police in Charlotte are sounding the alarm about fentanyl, saying the national issue has hit our community and offering a warning that people who use recreational drugs don't know what could be laced in it.

On Wednesday, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department held a news conference and called on parents to have serious conversations with their kids before school starts. According to CMPD, more than 30% of overdoses reported so far this year in Charlotte have been caused by fentanyl.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is usually prescribed for pain. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.

Police have said they've found more narcotics being laced with fentanyl. CMPD Lt. Sean Mitchell said Wednesday, "Fentanyl's in everything now, everything."

Debbie Dalton knows the dangers of fentanyl.

"He's my world. I'm still waiting on him to walk in the door or to hear, 'I love you mom,'" Dalton told Channel 9.

Her son, Hunter, was the light of her life and had his whole life ahead of him after graduating from UNC Charlotte. But in 2016, Hunter had ingested cocaine that was laced with fentanyl.

"I was writing Christmas cards, sitting down at the kitchen table and I was writing the very first card. I signed my husband's name and my name, and I went to sign Hunter's

name -- as I'm writing his name, the phone rang," Dalton said. "It said Hunter, so I thought, 'Yay! There's my boy!' And as soon as I answered, it was his roommate."

Dalton said nothing could prepare her for what she heard next: Hunter had overdosed.

"[It] took my 6'2" healthy son down, gave him a heart attack just like that," Dalton said. "Seven days in the hospital holding his hand, and the news just got worse every day until I held his hand when he took his last breath."

Dalton says her son had no idea about fentanyl. She also admitted that she used to have a negative mindset about overdoses.

"I'm guilty of being that person --before this happened-- that assumed if there was a drug overdose, it was in a back alley with someone with a needle in their arm, which is just a ridiculous misconception," Dalton said.

CMPD says that last year there were 213 overdose deaths in Charlotte, and over 180 of those involved fentanyl. This year, CMPD says 90 people have died in suspected overdoses, with 33 of them tied to fentanyl.

"There is no safe, recreational drug use any longer," Mitchell said.

Hunter's room is largely the same as he left it. There are trophies on display, diplomas on the wall, and pictures left behind. One thing left behind turned into an inspiration for Debbie.

"This is his bucket list we found after we lost him; and he actually put on there, 'Save someone's life,'" Dalton said.

That's a goal his mother is now striving for, leading the Hunter Dalton Life Foundation and taking his story to schools around the state.

"If we can prevent that phone call for any family --hopefully for many families-- then that's our mission," Dalton said. "If you're faced with a decision, remember that one second, one decision, and no second chance."

She's hoping to spare other families her pain.

"To parents watching, it's not you until it is," Dalton said. "And I pray it's never you."

If you would like Debbie to speak to a school nearby, [you can find more information here.](#)