

# New super smack puts Public Health in crisis mode

## Heroin-like opiate fentanyl's punch fast, can be lethal

By MARK HEDIN

**A** POWERFUL DRUG is crashing the party in San Francisco.

Fentanyl, a synthetically produced bluish-white, fine-powder opiate, is “the scariest one out there,” according to Dr. Phillip Coffin, director of substance use research at the Department of Public Health. “It’s the only one we measure in micrograms instead of milligrams,” Coffin said. “You just can’t titrate it (measure an appropriate dose) in the streets.”

Fentanyl is “up to 100 times more powerful than morphine and 30 to 50 times more than heroin,” according to a March news release by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

“There is a white powder ‘HEROIN’ going around that is causing a lot of folks to overdose,” reads a flyer distributed by the Homeless Youth Alliance and San Francisco Needle Exchange. “This heroin has been tested and is fentanyl, a really strong opiate. So if you are using it, please don’t

use alone and remember you can always do more but never do less. You should all carry Narcan (the familiar name for naloxone, an opiate antidote) on you because you never know when it will save someone’s life, be it a friend or a stranger. Please take care of each

**“Fentanyl, a really strong opiate. ... If you are using it, please don’t use alone.”**

FLYER,  
HOMELESS YOUTH ALLIANCE,  
S.F. NEEDLE EXCHANGE

other and be safe.”

“We documented 75 naloxone reversals of fentanyl” this July, Coffin said. Although some were initially reported as heroin overdoses, DPH believes that the fast-acting, short-lived high of “fine white powder” described in reports by people renewing their Narcan supplies sounds like fentanyl.

That’s triple the ODs reversed with Narcan in July a year ago. “They were all heroin,” Coffin wrote in an email to The

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Jim Meko fought for neighborhood

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# CENTRAL CITY

# EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

## DIVERSE CITY



**Nabihah Kaid**, from Yemen, could not allow her face to be photographed, in keeping with her Muslim faith. Here she cradles Lucky, the pet of a Curran House neighbor, a friend of her 7-year-old son, Muhamed. The Kaid family is one of three Muslim families living in TNDC's Curran House, a model of diversity on a tough block of the Tenderloin.

# BEING MUSLIM IN TL

## Yemeni family's remarkable story of how they cope

By TOM CARTER, PHOTOS PAUL DUNN

### PART 1: CLASH OF VALUES

**I**N THE SUN-LIT Curran House courtyard, 13-year-old Nada Kaid sits with her mother, Nabihah. Muslims from Yemen, poorest of the Arab countries, they wear traditional dress. Away from Curran House, it causes them some grief.

Nabihah's chador is a black robe that covers all but her face and hands. Nada wears separates of lighter dark colors, highlighted by her blue hijab, and a scarf. As with her mother, only face and hands show, a sign of devout modesty in Islam that, accompanied by a lowered gaze, commands respect among believers.

Sharen Hewitt stands nearby. She's The Extra's facilitator for our series of profiles of residents of TNDC's remarkably diverse Curran House, 67 units of nonprofit supportive housing in an evolving block of the Tenderloin. Hewitt lives here.

“Muslim women can't be photographed because of their religious restrictions,” Hewitt says. Just interviewing anyone in Yemen, let alone a woman, would be considered “invasive and unacceptable. And this is a very private family.”

Nada, her sweet face the picture of concentration, interprets her mother's replies to a reporter's questions. She speaks fluently, quickly and intelligently, beyond her years,

seamlessly adding her own comments to her mother's, who is speaking Arabic. Despite 7½ years at Curran House, Nabihah cannot speak English, only a few words.

Jamal, 45, head of the Kaid family, is away working. He's lived in San Francisco 26 years, but traveled frequently to Yemen, was married and started his family there. Now he has six children: five live here at Curran House, one is in Yemen, where more than half the population lives in poverty. Jamal sent money to his family in Yemen until he could bring them here, the land of freedom, education and safety — despite high crime — in June 2006.

A few days earlier, in the lobby of the Curran, The Extra's reporting team first met the mother and daughter. News from Yemen, on the brink of collapse, was worsening. Nabihah's mother's house was cleaved in two by a bomb; luckily, no one was injured. Nabihah was distraught, Nada was agitated. Their relatives were in grave danger. Airports were shut down, ports were blockaded. Starvation was a daily threat.

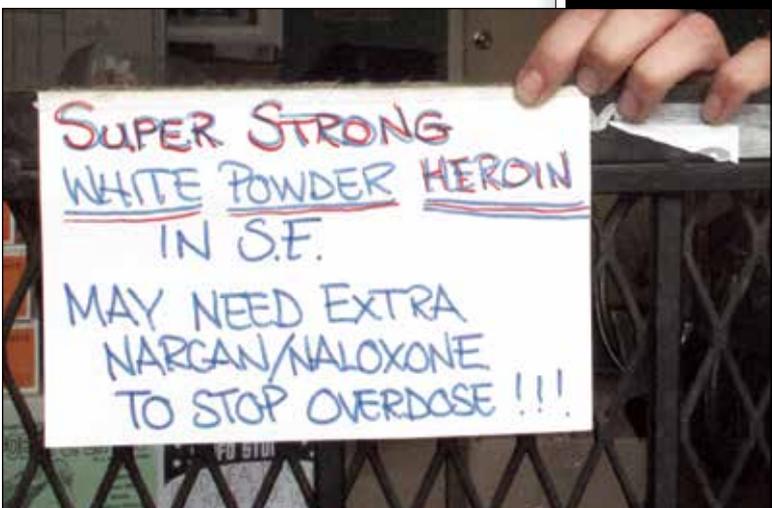
“\$25 for a bottle of water!” Nada exclaimed. “Children buried by buildings falling. There are no more schools. It's so sad.”

Nabihah's eyes were wide with fear. She kept moving her fingers up to her mouth, and down, as if eating popcorn.

“Food,” she said. “Wa-tur.”

As interpreter, Nada is her mother's guide and point person outside the mosque they attend at 20 Jones St., the 22-year-old Islamic Society of San Francisco, where 400 Muslims attend regularly. It's the largest of five mosques in the city and the only one where the khutbah (sermon) is in English. The mosque has a reputation for questioning old beliefs. Some years ago, it took the liberal step of removing the partition in the masjid (sanctuary) that traditionally separates men from the women.

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MARK HEDIN

**On the gate** at the S.F. Drug Users Union, a sign warns of some super-strong smack going around — probably fentanyl.