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FREE COMPANION GUIDE

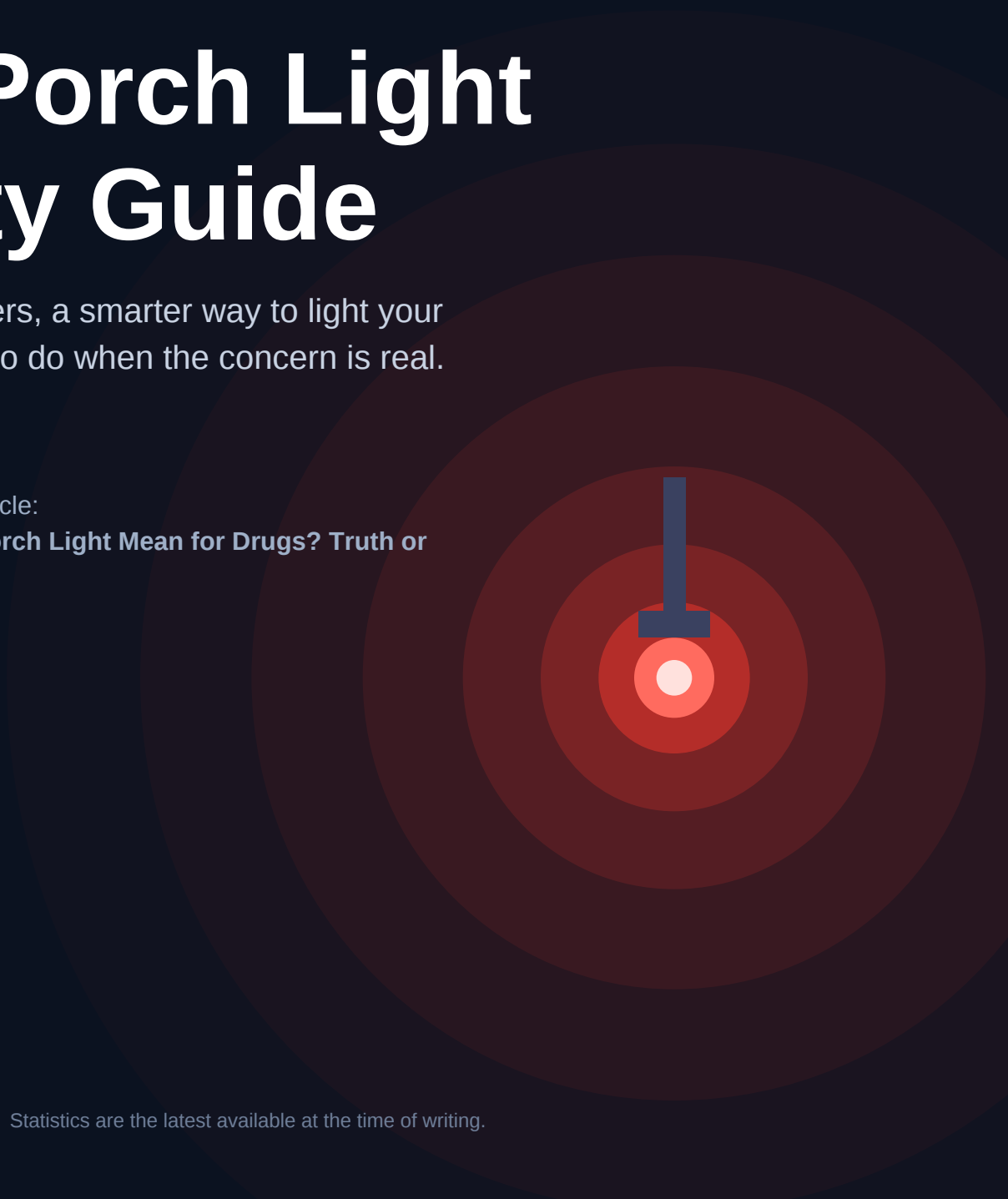
The Porch Light Safety Guide

The 2026 numbers, a smarter way to light your entry, and what to do when the concern is real.

Companion to our article:

What Does a Red Porch Light Mean for Drugs? Truth or Rumor

Updated September 2026 | Statistics are the latest available at the time of writing.



The 2026 numbers, in plain English

The old rumor says a bulb color tells you who is dealing drugs. The real picture lives in public data. Here are four figures worth knowing this year.

67,798

predicted U.S. overdose deaths in the 12 months ending March 2026, down 12.3% from a year earlier.

CDC, Aug 2026 release

47M+

counterfeit pills DEA seized in 2025, plus nearly 10,000 lb of fentanyl powder.

DEA Get Smart About Drugs

2 mg

of fentanyl can be a potentially lethal dose. That fits on the tip of a pencil.

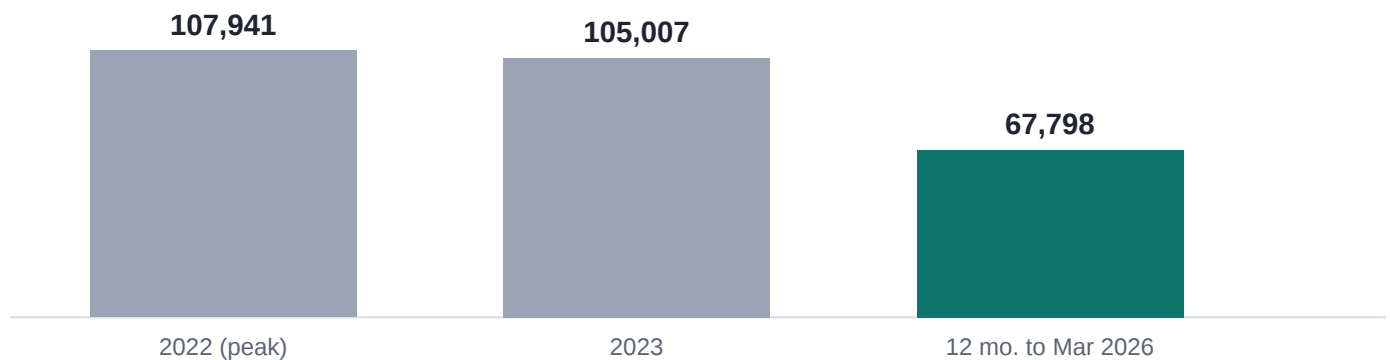
DEA public safety alert

36%

minimum drop in serious nighttime outdoor crime after temporary streetlights in a New York City randomized trial.

Chalfin et al., NBER / J. Quant. Criminology

U.S. overdose deaths are falling, and 67,798 is still a lot



That is about **37% below the 2022 peak** and still roughly **186 deaths a day**. Progress is real, and it is not finished.

Read the fine print. CDC figures are provisional and can change as records finalize; the 2022 and 2023 bars use final counts, so the comparison is approximate. DEA pages currently report different shares of fentanyl pills that carry a lethal dose (29% on one page, 5 in 10 on another), and earlier DEA reports were higher or lower. DEA guidance is consistent on one point: you cannot tell a fake pill by how it looks.

Light your porch for safety

Good lighting is one of the few safety tools that works quietly, every night. Start here before you spend money on anything fancy.

- ☐ **Light the door, steps, and path first.**
Tripping hazards and dark corners cluster where people walk in and out.
- ☐ **Pick a fixture rated for outdoors.**
Look for a damp or wet rating on the packaging, especially under an open roof.
- ☐ **Add a motion or dusk-to-dawn sensor.**
The light comes on when you forget, and it changes what a visitor notices.
- ☐ **Keep daily light warm white.**
Save red for the day or cause you are marking, then switch back.
- ☐ **Trim shrubs and clear clutter.**
Overgrown plants block the beam and hide the view of your door.
- ☐ **Take a night walk once a month.**
Stand at the street and check what the light reaches and what stays dark.

What the research shows, and what it does not

In 2016, New York City randomly assigned temporary high-power streetlights to **39** public housing developments and kept **38** as comparisons. After accounting for crime moving to nearby streets, researchers found a drop of **at least 36%** in nighttime outdoor index crimes. A 2022 follow-up in the same research program reported that the effect held up over time.

The catch: the study tested streetlights in public housing, not porch bulbs on single homes. Treat it as strong evidence that outdoor light deters crime, not as a promise about one lamp. A well-lit entry still helps you, your guests, and the delivery driver.

If the concern is a person, not a bulb

Fentanyl makes overdoses fast and unpredictable, including for people who thought they took a normal pill. Five minutes of preparation can matter more than any porch fixture.

Possible overdose signs

- Will not wake up or respond
- Breathing is slow, weak, or has stopped
- Lips or fingertips look blue or gray
- Pinpoint pupils
- Gurgling or choking sounds

What to do, in order

- 1 Call 911 right away.
- 2 Give naloxone (nasal spray) if you have it.
- 3 If trained, give rescue breaths. Turn the person on their side if they are breathing.
- 4 Stay until help arrives. Call 911 even if they wake up, because naloxone can wear off.

Three habits worth building

■ Keep naloxone at home.

Check the expiration date now. SAMHSA lists nasal spray shelf life at roughly 36 to 48 months, and notes that expired naloxone may work less well but has not been shown to cause harm.

■ Treat every pill from a non-pharmacy source as unsafe.

DEA says the only safe medications come from a licensed pharmacy with a prescription.

■ Know your local laws.

Good Samaritan and naloxone rules differ by state. A quick search for your state takes two minutes.

Need help for yourself or someone you know?

SAMHSA National Helpline: **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**, or text your ZIP code to **435748**. Free, confidential, 24/7, in English and Spanish, with referrals to local treatment and support.

Your red light calendar and porch sign

Timing tells neighbors why the light is red. These dates are the ones worth marking on your calendar for the next 8 months.

DATE	OBSERVANCE	WHAT IT MEANS
Oct 23-31, 2026	Red Ribbon Week	Drug prevention. 2026 theme: "Make a Difference. Be a Hero. Stay Drug Free."
February 2027	American Heart Month	AHA Go Red for Women campaign runs all month.
Feb 5, 2027	National Wear Red Day	First Friday of February.
May 4, 2027	International Firefighters' Day	NFFF asks people to swap a white bulb for red.

Cut out and post by your door

Our porch light is red for...

- ☐

Heart Month (February)
- ☐

Firefighters (May 4)
- ☐

Red Ribbon Week (Oct 23-31)
- ☐

A holiday or celebration
- ☐

Other: _____

Nothing to worry about. Ask us, we love to talk about it.