

What are the risks?

Using fentanyl has a number of different risks

Psychological:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Aggressive behaviour in withdrawal
- Irritability
- Isolation
- Lack of motivation
- Social exclusion
- Anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure in normally pleasurable activities)
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of problem-solving ability
- Self-neglect

Physical:

- Overdose
- Respiratory arrest
- Death
- Tolerance levels
- Choking on vomit
- Vein damage if injecting
- Gangrene
- Sniffing or inhaling synthetic opioids may damage your throat and nose.
- Lung damage
- BBV's and other risks of sharing needles and other injecting equipment
- Blood clots/ thrombosis
- Constipation
- Blurred vision

Did you know?

The high potency of fentanyl greatly increases risk of overdose, especially if a person who uses drugs is unaware that a powder or pill contains fentanyl.

Fentanyl and the law

Fentanyls are class A drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act due to the potential health and social harms associated with their use.

If the police catch you with synthetic opioids they are likely to take some action. This could include a formal caution, arrest and prosecution.

A conviction for a drug-related offence could have a pretty serious impact. It can stop you visiting certain countries – for example the United States – and limit the types of jobs you can apply for.

Find out more

If you would like more information or support on fentanyl or you are affected by someone else's use please contact us at Inclusion Recovery Hampshire.

Information is also available at:

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk

Talk to Frank Website: www.talktofrank.com

HOW TO CONTACT US

NORTH: 01782 639856
StarsNorth@mpft.nhs.uk

EAST: 01283 741053
StarsEast@mpft.nhs.uk

WEST: 01785 270080
StarsWest@mpft.nhs.uk

Or visit: www.staffstars.org

You. Me. Us

This leaflet was created by:  Part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
Find out more at www.inclusion.org

Fentanyl What you need to know!



 STaRS

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What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid analgesic (painkiller) that is similar to morphine but a lot stronger.

- They range in potency but some are incredibly strong and can be effective at very small doses. Its easy to take too much, overdose and die.
- It is typically used to treat patients with severe pain or to manage pain after surgery.
- Fentanyl works by binding to the body's opioid receptors, which are found in areas of the brain that control pain and emotions.

The myths

- You can't overdose from smoking fentanyl
- You can tell the difference between heroin and fentanyl
- It is safe as it is prescribed

These are untrue, the strength of fentanyl makes it very easy to overdose and it's appearance can make it difficult to identify whether it has been mixed with heroin.

How is fentanyl taken?

Pharmaceutical fentanyl is often administered via injection, transdermal patch or in lozenges.

Non-pharmaceutical fentanyl can be sold as a powder; spiked on blotter paper; mixed with or substituted for heroin; or as tablets that mimic other, less potent opioids. They can be injected, sniffed, swallowed or heated and inhaled.



What does it look like?

Time-release formulations for fentanyl provide strong pain relief over time. They come in two forms - a lollipop and a patch.

Fentanyl also comes as a small piece of film that can be dissolved under the tongue and a pill meant to be lodged inside the cheek. In hospital settings, fentanyl can be injected.

Using the drug illicitly is highly dangerous, as the difference between a therapeutic dose and a deadly dose is very small.

Illicit fentanyl has been sold as white powder, or tablets and it has also been found mixed with synthetic cannabinoids in herbal smoking mixtures, Worryingly, it is being sold to people who have no idea what they are buying contains fentanyl.



Did you know?

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What are the effects?

As with natural opiates the effects of synthetic opioids include:

- Pain relief
- Euphoria
- Sense of well-being
- Relaxation
- Sleepiness
- Sweating
- Itching
- Nausea
- Feeling of warmth
- Slows down the way the body works

Have you heard about naloxone?

Naloxone temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. It saves lives.

If you are using fentanyl or any other opioid, speak to your key worker about getting naloxone.