

Fact Sheet

Fentanyl



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What is Fentanyl?



Fentanyl is a member of the class of drugs known as fentanyls, rapid-acting opioid (synthetic opiate) drugs that alleviate pain without causing loss of consciousness. Fentanyl is odorless and appears as crystals or crystalline powder. Fentanyl is estimated to be fifty to one hundred times as potent as morphine and hundreds of times more potent than heroin. Street drugs may vary in strength. It is a drug of abuse.

Exposure

Fentanyl can be absorbed into the body via inhalation, oral exposure or ingestion, or skin contact. It is not known whether fentanyl can be absorbed through the eye. Fentanyl can be administered intravenously (IV), intramuscularly (IM), or as a skin patch (transdermally).

Health Effects

Because fentanyl is such a strong opiate, the chances of overdose occurring are greater than in less-potent opioid medications. A fentanyl overdose can cause serious short-term and long-term health consequences; in many cases, fentanyl misuse can be fatal. Fentanyl is potentially lethal when used in combination with heroin or other opioids.

Misuse of narcotic medication can cause addiction, overdose, or death, especially in a child or other person using the medicine without a prescription.

A fentanyl overdose may result in these characteristic physical symptoms:

- Pinpoint pupils
- Shallow breathing
- Dizziness
- Lethargy
- Loss of consciousness
- Nausea/vomiting
- Weak pulse
- Cold/clammy skin
- Coma
- Heart failure
- Death

Treatment

Once fentanyl overdose or exposure symptoms begin, it is important to get help as soon as possible. Treatment of an overdose may require multiple doses of Naloxone or Narcan. Call 911 immediately after recognition of exposure or overdose.

Prevention

Use extreme caution when handling suspected illicitly manufactured fentanyl, white powders, and unknown substances. Use appropriate safety precautions and personal protective equipment. Carry a supply of Naloxone or Narcan so that it can be administered immediately to mitigate the effects of the overdose.

Training and Naloxone rescue kits are available to those who use opioids or family/ friends of users. For more information contact the St. Clair County Health Department (810) 987-5300.



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

- ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov