

FENTANYL

What Teens and Parents Need to Know

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is used medically for pain management, most often after a severe injury or surgery.

It is critical for both teens and parents to be aware of the dangers associated with fentanyl when used outside of a medical setting. Here are some key points.

THE DANGERS OF FENTANYL

POTENCY. Fentanyl is much more potent than other opioids, such as morphine and heroin. It is 50–100 times more potent, in fact. Even a small amount can have significant effects, and overdoses and death can occur very easily.

CONTAMINATION. Other drugs like heroin and cocaine are sometimes mixed with fentanyl. This “lacing” of drugs with fentanyl dramatically increases the risk of overdose for individuals who are unaware of the fentanyl contamination.

ADDICTION. Like other opioids, fentanyl is highly addictive, especially when misused or taken for recreational purposes. *Addiction to fentanyl can quickly lead to overdose and death.*

WITHDRAWAL. When someone is physically dependent on fentanyl, abruptly stopping its use can lead to withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms can be severe and may include anxiety, muscle and bone pain, and nausea.

TEENS: HOW TO STAY SAFE

AVOID NON-PRESCRIPTION USE. Never use fentanyl or any other prescription medication that is not prescribed to you. If you have been prescribed an opioid, take it only as directed and dispose of any unused medication properly.

BE AWARE. Illegal drugs like heroin, as well as prescription painkillers like hydrocodone (Vicodin), oxycodone (Oxycontin), morphine, and codeine are also opioids. *Prescription opioids are the most commonly misused drugs in the U.S.*

KNOW SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE.

- ▶ difficulty breathing
- ▶ extreme drowsiness
- ▶ confusion
- ▶ slurred speech
- ▶ nausea/vomiting
- ▶ pinpoint pupils
- ▶ blue lips and nails
- ▶ loss of consciousness

Naloxone (Narcan) is a medication that can reverse opioid overdose. If you or someone you know is at risk of an opioid overdose, having naloxone readily available can be life-saving.

A NOTE FOR PARENTS

Have frequent, honest conversations with your child about the dangers of drugs. *One conversation isn't enough.* If you suspect your child is using drugs or is around those who do, express your concerns without judgment. For more information and resources, visit drugfree.org.

To learn more about opioids and their effects, check out this short video.

