

Fentanyl: Facts Every Nursing Facility Should Know

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. It is a major contributor to fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the United States.

Types of Fentanyl

There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illegally made fentanyl. Nursing facilities are most familiar with pharmaceutical fentanyl, which is often prescribed to treat severe pain, especially after surgery and for advanced-stage cancer.

Pharmaceutical fentanyl products come in the following forms:

- Oral transmucosal lozenges, commonly referred to as Fentanyl “lollipops” (Actiq®)
- Effervescent buccal tablets (Fentora®)
- Sublingual tablets (Abstral®)
- Sublingual sprays (Subsys®)
- Nasal sprays (Lazanda®)
- Transdermal patches (Duragesic®)
- Injectable formulations

As nursing facilities treat an increasing number of residents with substance use disorders, it is also essential that they become familiar with **illegally made fentanyl (IMF)**.

IMF comes in different forms, including liquid and powder.

- Powdered fentanyl is commonly mixed with heroin, cocaine and methamphetamines and made into pills that resemble prescription opioids.
- In its liquid form, IMF can be found in nasal sprays and eye drops. It can also be dropped onto paper or small candies.



References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Fentanyl Facts
Department of Justice/Drug Enforcement Administration: Drug Fact Sheet

How is Fentanyl Abused?

Fentanyl patches, for example, are prescribed to some residents for pain management. These patches can be abused by removing the gel content and injecting or ingesting it. Fentanyl patches have also been frozen, cut into pieces, and placed under the tongue or in the cheek cavity. Fentanyl can be snorted/sniffed, smoked, taken orally by pill or tablet, or spiked onto blotter paper.

Street Names for Fentanyl

Nursing facility staff should be aware of various slang words used to reference fentanyl. Some street names for fentanyl include:

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| • Apace | • He-Man |
| • China Girl | • Jackpot |
| • Chin Town | • King Ivory |
| • Dance Fever | • Murder 8 |
| • Friend | • Poison |
| • Good Fellas | • Tango & Cash |
| • Great Bear | |

If these terms are heard, nursing facility staff should follow the facility’s reporting protocol.

What Are the Overdose Effects of Fentanyl?

Overdose may result in stupor, changes in pupillary size, cold and clammy skin, cyanosis, coma, and respiratory failure leading to death.

Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. Even in small doses, it can be deadly. **Over 150 people die every day from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.**