

## Can I drive when I'm taking fentanyl?

You are responsible for ensuring you are fit to drive. Northern Ireland law allows you to drive when taking medicines if your ability is not affected. Do not drive or use machinery if:

- You have recently started taking fentanyl and don't know how it affects you
- The dose or frequency has changed recently
- You have taken alcohol along with fentanyl
- You feel drowsy or sleepy, or cannot concentrate.

Advice is available at NI Direct:



## Can I become addicted to fentanyl?

Addiction is not a problem when the right dose is taken for the right reason and reviewed appropriately. If you no longer need fentanyl, your doctor will support you to reduce it gradually. Do not stop taking it suddenly without medical advice.

## How should I store fentanyl?

Store in a dry place, below 25°C and out of reach of children.

## How do I get more fentanyl?

Contact your GP to arrange a prescription. Take this to your community pharmacy. Do not let your supply run out before requesting the prescriptions as it may take a few days for your pharmacy to order. Make sure you have enough for weekend and public holidays.

## Further information on licensing

Fentanyl injection is licensed in the UK as a pain reliever used during surgery. It has been used in syringe pumps to relieve pain for years and is known to be safe and effective.

# Fentanyl in syringe pump in supportive & palliative care

## Information Leaflet for Patients

## What is fentanyl used for?

Fentanyl is in a group of pain relieving medicines called opioids, similar to morphine. It is used to relieve pain or breathlessness.

It may be prescribed:

- If other opioids have caused side effects or have not relieved your pain enough
- If your liver or kidneys are not working well
- To reduce constipation.

## Notes



**This medicine is ONLY FOR YOU. Never give it to anyone else even if their symptoms appear to be the same as yours.**

## How do I take my Fentanyl?

Fentanyl injections are available as 50microgram/mL ampoules:

100microgram in 2mL injection

500microgram in 10mL injection

The injection is usually given in a syringe pump. Your healthcare team will decide the dose and adjust it depending on your pain.

A nurse will use a syringe pump to give it as a continuous infusion under the skin over 24 hours. It may be mixed with other medicines for symptoms. The nurse will reload the pump every day.

## What are the common side effects?

All medicines can cause side effects, though not everyone gets them.

- Drowsiness or dizziness. If affected do not drive or operate machinery. This may wear off in a few days
- Nausea may occur and usually gets better in a few days. Anti-sickness medicines can be helpful
- Constipation may occur, though it is reduced compared to other opioids. It is important to take your regular laxatives
- Some people develop diarrhoea or cramps if they have been on another opioid before. Your doctor will review and may adjust your dose.

**If you feel very drowsy, confused, have slow breathing, jerking movements, vivid dreams or hallucinations, tell your doctor immediately.** They may adjust the dose or change to a different medicine.

Allergic reactions to this medicine are very rare. You should contact your doctor immediately if you develop difficulty breathing, a skin rash, itching or swollen face.

## What is breakthrough pain?

Breakthrough pain is when you have occasional episodes of pain although you are on regular pain relief.

When on fentanyl, you may be on a different pain reliever to be taken by mouth or as injection.

Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about how often you have breakthrough pain so that your doses can be adjusted.

## Is it safe to take other medicines while on fentanyl?

Fentanyl may increase the effects of other medicines that cause drowsiness or dizziness. When it is started, you may need lower doses of other pain medicines.

Your doctor will adjust doses as needed.

Some medicines may increase the effects of fentanyl. Some examples are fluconazole, clarithromycin, erythromycin, cimetidine. Other medicines decrease effects eg. carbamazepine.

Talk to a pharmacist if starting new medicines.

Tell your healthcare professionals what medicines you take, including any you buy in a pharmacy or shop, herbal remedies or recreational drugs.

Talk to your doctor if you take antidepressants with fentanyl. Very rarely an interaction called serotonin syndrome may occur. If you experience agitation, sweating, muscle stiffness, fever, high blood pressure or involuntary eye movements contact your doctor urgently.

## Can I drink alcohol when I'm taking fentanyl?

It is recommended you avoid alcohol while taking fentanyl as it can worsen effects like dizziness or sleepiness.

Talk to your doctor if you want to discuss this further.