

Renaissance Recovery Blog

renaissancerecoverycenter.com/what-makes-fentanyl-so-dangerous

What Makes Fentanyl So Dangerous?



Fentanyl is far more potent and potentially deadly than heroin. Drug dependence and other serious consequences of misusing the drug, even in very small amounts, are more life-threatening than risks from heroin or other opioid abuse. So, awareness of the unusually great danger in this type of drug misuse is critical for its users.

Topics covered on this blog:

According to a [Harvard Medical School](#) report, fentanyl delivers about 50 to 100 times greater potency than heroin or morphine. There have been a shocking number of deaths from fentanyl overdose over recent years in the United States. There were 36,359 deaths from fentanyl overdose just in 2019. That shocking number makes the deadly capacity of this synthetic (manmade) opioid alarmingly clear.

But *why* is fentanyl so dangerous? What causes it to be so much more deadly than other highly dangerous misused opioids like morphine and heroin? To understand the problems that cause fentanyl to be so extremely dangerous, it's necessary to be clear on how fentanyl affects the body and other problems that make fentanyl uniquely hazardous.

What Makes Fentanyl So Dangerous?

Fentanyl, like other opioids, acts on the body through binding to opioid receptors. Through this process, fentanyl generates an extraordinarily relaxed sensation and feelings of euphoria. It is the incomparable speed to the interactions that cause these effects that make even relatively very small doses of fentanyl uniquely potent and dangerous.

The reasons why fentanyl is so powerful fall into several categories: 1) fentanyl's unique traits, 2) a lack of knowledge among people who use fentanyl illegally, and 3) the physical effects of the drug. These are explained a little more clearly here:

Characteristics of Fentanyl

Rapid assimilation Although fentanyl acts on the body the same way other opioids do, it is the astounding speed with which it assimilates into the bloodstream to cause its effects that is so different from other powerful opioid drugs.

Rapid binding What causes fentanyl to deliver stronger effects of euphoria is the much faster speed with which the drug binds to opioid receptors of cells. This rapidity of binding is also one of the causes contributing to making fentanyl so highly addictive and such a dangerous substance.

Potency Due to fentanyl's extreme potency, a much smaller dosage has the same effect as much larger quantities of other opioids. The difference in doses is so great that while other opioids are measured in doses of *milligrams*, fentanyl doses are measured in *micrograms*.

Lack of Knowledge About Fentanyl

Unawareness of dosage When people use fentanyl illegally, there's typically no way for them to know precisely how much they are ingesting. This problem, which is inherent in drug abuse, combined with the extraordinarily high potency of fentanyl is one way that the drug becomes so dangerous.

Cut into other drugs In some cases, people may *not know* they're taking this deadly drug when fentanyl is used to cut other drugs. So, even a very small amount can cause an overdose and quickly result in death virtually without warning.

Life-Threatening Physical Effects of Fentanyl

Respiratory depression With all opioids, a potentially deadly effect is respiratory depression. Fentanyl can cause this impact from a much smaller dose than other opioids. If someone ingests more than a safe dose of an opioid, breathing can become slow to the extent that the person will die. In using fentanyl, this respiratory effect can happen much faster.

Wooden chest syndrome Chest wall rigidity is yet another deadly possibility from taking fentanyl intravenously. As respiration is slowing, the user is at risk of wooden chest syndrome. With the onset of the syndrome, the chest and abdominal muscles become very tight and ultimately so rigid that trying to perform life-saving CPR is too difficult or impossible.

Fentanyl Addiction The above reasons that fentanyl is uniquely dangerous are, of course, vastly compounded by the drug being extremely addictive. Fentanyl assimilates in the blood so rapidly that the user builds a tolerance to it very quickly. This means that the user feels the need for larger and larger doses in order to experience the same level of euphoric high sensation. The frequent increases in dosages place users at higher and higher risk of overdose.

Renaissance Recovery Center, Gilbert Arizona

Renaissance Recovery Center is a drug rehabilitation center for outpatient addiction treatment in Arizona. Our addiction specialists work with each client one-on-one to develop a personalized treatment program for recovery from fentanyl addiction.

We offer affordable opioid addiction treatment. We accept most health insurance and can confirm your coverage of the fentanyl addiction treatment program for you.

Call Renaissance Recovery Center, Gilbert AZ at (480) 725-8215, or contact us online to schedule your free assessment and let us help with the support you need to live your life free from fentanyl abuse.
