



Lesson Plan: Understanding Fentanyl

Learning Objective

Students will learn what fentanyl is, how it is used, its dangers, short- and long-term effects, and why it has become a major public health crisis.

1. What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a **powerful synthetic opioid**—50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Doctors sometimes prescribe it to treat severe pain, especially for cancer patients. However, most fentanyl on the streets is **illegally made** and extremely dangerous.

Q&A

Q: What type of drug is fentanyl?

A: A powerful synthetic opioid.

2. How Is Fentanyl Used?

- Prescribed legally as patches, lozenges, or shots.
- Illegally sold as powder, fake pills, or mixed into other drugs without people knowing.
- Many people who overdose never even knew they were taking fentanyl.

Q&A

Q: In what forms is fentanyl prescribed legally?

A: Patches, lozenges, or injections.

Q: Why is street fentanyl so dangerous?

A: It's often mixed with other drugs or sold as fake pills without people knowing.



3. Fake Pills: One Pill Can Kill

Drug dealers press fentanyl into pills that look like real prescription medicine (such as Oxycodone, Percocet, or Xanax). Just **one fake pill** containing fentanyl can be deadly.

Q&A

Q: Why is the phrase “One Pill Can Kill” used?

A: Because even a single fake pill with fentanyl can cause death.

4. How Does Fentanyl Kill?

Fentanyl slows down the body’s central nervous system.

- Breathing slows or stops.
- Oxygen can’t reach the brain.
- Death can occur within minutes.

Q&A

Q: What happens to the body when someone overdoses on fentanyl?

A: Breathing slows or stops, leading to brain damage or death.

5. Short- & Long-Term Effects

Short-term effects:

- Extreme happiness (euphoria)
- Drowsiness
- Nausea, confusion
- Constipation
- Trouble breathing

Long-term effects:

- Addiction



- Tolerance (needing more to feel the same effect)
- Dependence and withdrawal
- High risk of overdose and death

Q&A

Q: Name two short-term effects of fentanyl.

A: Euphoria, drowsiness, nausea, confusion, trouble breathing.

Q: What happens when someone develops tolerance?

A: They need more of the drug to feel the same effect.

6. A Short History of Fentanyl

- **1960s:** Fentanyl was first developed as a medical painkiller.
- **1990s–2000s:** Used in hospitals for cancer patients and surgeries.
- **2010s–Present:** Illegally made fentanyl floods the drug market, leading to skyrocketing overdose deaths.

Q&A

Q: When was fentanyl first developed?

A: In the 1960s as a medical painkiller.



7. Fentanyl Deaths: A Catastrophe

- Over **70,000 deaths in the U.S. in 2022** were linked to fentanyl.
- Fentanyl is now the **leading cause of drug overdose deaths**.
- Teens and young adults are at high risk because many don't know the pills they take are fake.

Q&A

Q: How many deaths in the U.S. were linked to fentanyl in 2022?

A: Over 70,000.

Q: Why are teens at high risk?

A: Because they may unknowingly take fake pills that contain fentanyl.

Closing Discussion

- Why do you think fentanyl is so dangerous compared to other drugs?
- What can you do if you or a friend is offered pills or drugs?