

HOW FENTANYL WORKS



FOR OUR LIVES

Fentanyl is a powerful and addictive drug that affects the **brain and body**.

Here is what to know.



Fentanyl tells your body to **breathe less.**

Fentanyl is an opioid drug that affects breathing. Doctors can prescribe it for people with severe pain, like after surgery. But illegal fentanyl is made without safety rules, and it's often mixed unevenly into fake pills or other drugs. You can't smell, taste, or see it.



Fentanyl starts to affect your brain and body when it attaches to “opioid receptors” in brain cells. This takes away pain and causes happy, calm feelings. That’s why fentanyl is so addictive. The brain wants more of those feelings.



Fentanyl makes the brain think the body needs less air. So the brain tells the lungs to breathe less. Even a tiny amount of fentanyl can cause an overdose, which is when breathing gets too slow or stops.



Medicine called naloxone can reverse an overdose. Naloxone (also called Narcan) replaces the fentanyl attached to the opioid receptors, and the person starts breathing again. Anyone can use naloxone to save someone’s life.



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Learn more about fentanyl and watch videos about people helping to end overdose.