



## What is fentanyl?

- It's a strong synthetic opioid first created in a laboratory in 1960
- It was developed into a variety of medications in the 1990s-2000s
  - Wearable patch that constantly administers fentanyl over several days to combat chronic pain
  - Lollipops, lozenges, and dissolvable film to be placed against the cheek for quick-acting pain relief

## What is fentanyl used for?

- Chronic pain due to cancer or other severe illnesses
- Acute pain
- Palliative care

## What does fentanyl do?

- Like all opioids, fentanyl binds with receptors in the brain to reduce perception of pain
- Induces sedation/drowsiness and potentially slowed/ineffective breathing
- Can induce feeling of euphoria

## Why is fentanyl dangerous?

Note: Fentanyl is safe when used properly under direction of a medical provider

- It's a very strong opioid that may lead to overdose at relatively low doses
- It's commonly found in the illicit drug market as a contaminant of other drugs
  - Users may not realize they are taking fentanyl or are unaware of how much they are taking



## What do we know about fentanyl in Montana?

- It's the **second most common medication** provided to patients by EMS enroute to the hospital, preceded only by oxygen<sup>1</sup>
- **16%** of fatal drug overdoses involved fentanyl in 2020, **30%** of fatal drug overdoses involved fentanyl in 2021<sup>2</sup>
- Dosage units of fentanyl seized by Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area officers has increased by **424%** (75 to 393) from 2016 to 2020.<sup>3</sup>

1. EMS & Trauma System Section. (May 2021). *Montana EMS Annual Report 2021: A Summary of 2020 EMS Data*. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Found at: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/assets/publichealth/EMSTS/Data/EMSannualreport2021.pdf>

2. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Vital Statistics Analysis Unit, 2020-2021

3. Montana Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation. *Montana Fentanyl Trends, 2021*. <https://leg.mt.gov/content/publications/fiscal/2023-Interim/IBC-D/DOJ-Fentanyl-Summary-2021.pdf#:~:text=Montana%20Highway%20Patrol%E2%80%99s%20Criminal%20Interdiction%20Team%20reported%20two,totaling%203%2C571%20pills%20and%20an%20additional%2036.2%20grams>