

Medicines for Children: information for parents and carers

Fentanyl lozenges for pain



This leaflet is about the use of fentanyl lozenges for 'breakthrough' pain in children with severe long-lasting pain. This might be pain from an injury, after an operation or due to an illness. Fentanyl lozenges are also used to provide pain relief during a short surgical or medical procedure.

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Fentanyl can be dangerous if used incorrectly. Accidental use, particularly by young children, can result in death.

Name of drug

Fentanyl

Brand name: Actiq®


Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Fentanyl lozenges provide extra pain relief when needed.

What doses are available?


- Lozenges come on sticks and are sometimes called lollipops.
- They come in doses of 200, 400, 600 and 800 micrograms, and 1.2 and 1.6 mg; each lozenge contains 2 grams of glucose.

When should I give fentanyl lozenges?

- Lozenges are usually used to treat 'breakthrough' pain in children who are already taking morphine or other strong medicines. They provide extra pain relief when it is needed. This may be during a short medical or surgical procedure, or because your child's usual medicine is not providing enough pain relief.
 - Your child should have only one lozenge for any one episode of breakthrough pain. If this does not seem enough, contact your doctor for advice.
-  Do not give your child more than four lozenges in 24 hours.
- If the lozenge is being used to provide pain relief for a medical or surgical procedure, the person doing the procedure will say when your child should start sucking the lozenge.

How much fentanyl should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of fentanyl (the dose) that is right for your child and which dose lozenge provides this. This will be shown on the medicine label.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.**

How should I give fentanyl lozenges?

A detailed information leaflet is provided with the lozenges. The following is a summary. If you are not sure what to do, ask your doctor for advice.

- Unwrap the lozenge just before you give it to your child.
- Your child needs to hold the lozenge in the mouth, between the gums and the inside of the cheek. The drug quickly gets from the cheek into the blood. It does not need to be swallowed. (It is not harmful if swallowed, but will not work as well.)
- Your child should move the lozenge around to different areas of the cheek, and turn the lozenge on its stick so

that all sides come into contact with the mouth. This should be done quite slowly – it should take about 15 minutes to dissolve the whole lozenge. If it is done too quickly, more of the drug will be swallowed and it will not work as well.

- Your child should not bite or chew the lozenge. (Biting or chewing the lozenge does not make it work faster.)
- Your child may want to have a small drink of water before having the lozenge, but should not eat or drink while sucking it.

When should the medicine start working?


Your child should start to feel less pain 5–15 minutes after starting to suck the lozenge.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

If your child feels sick, or is sick, when they are sucking the lozenge, they should stop sucking it. (See advice below about disposal of an unfinished lozenge.)

What if I give too much?


 It can be dangerous to give your child too much fentanyl.

 If there is **any possibility** that your child may have had too much fentanyl take your child to hospital or telephone for an ambulance **straight away**. Tell the doctor that your child may have had too much fentanyl. Take the medicine with you, so that the doctor can see what has been taken.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children feel better, but sometimes they cause effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects that you must do something about

 If your child has difficulty breathing, stops breathing or seems very sleepy, they may have had too much fentanyl. Take your child to hospital or telephone for an ambulance **straight away**.

Other side-effects that you need to know about

- Your child is likely to feel sick or be sick (vomit) for the first few days of taking fentanyl. Your doctor may prescribe another drug to help with this.
- Most children get constipation (have difficulty doing a poo) when taking fentanyl. You can help by giving your child plenty to drink. Your doctor will probably suggest that your child also takes laxatives – medicines that will help them go to the toilet. It is important that your child doesn't strain on the toilet.
- Your child may get headaches, feel dizzy, have little energy, or get a rash. Contact your doctor if you are worried.

Can other common medicines be given at the same time as fentanyl?

- **Do not** give your child any medicines that contain codeine or dihydrocodeine, as these will make the side-effects of fentanyl worse. Some painkillers and cough medicines contain codeine or dihydrocodeine (you can find this information on the label).
- Fentanyl should not be taken with some common drugs that you get on prescription. It is important to tell your doctor *and* pharmacist that your child is taking fentanyl.
- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

⚠ Only give these lozenges to **your** child. **Never** give them to anyone else, even if they seem to have the same condition, as this is dangerous.

☎ If you think someone else may have taken some fentanyl by accident, take them to hospital **straight away**.

⚠ Fentanyl is particularly dangerous for young children. Take extreme care to store lozenges where children cannot see or reach them. Ideally this should be in a locked container.

- If your child does not finish a lozenge, run it under hot water until all the lozenge has dissolved. Dispose of lozenge sticks carefully, where young children cannot get them.
- Each lozenge contains about 2 grams of glucose, which may cause a problem if your child has diabetes mellitus or is on a ketogenic diet. Check with your doctor or nurse.
- Do not give your child grapefruit juice, as this affects the way fentanyl is broken down by the body.

General advice

- If fentanyl doesn't seem to be helping your child's pain, contact your doctor for advice. **Do not** give extra lozenges.
- Make sure that you always have enough lozenges. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the lozenges are not older than the 'use by' date on the packaging. Give out-of-date or unused medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where I should keep this medicine?

⚠ Keep all medicines where children cannot see or reach them. This is vital with fentanyl, which is very dangerous for young children. If possible, keep lozenges in a locked container.

- Keep the lozenges somewhere cool and dry, away from direct heat and light. They do not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Keep the lozenges in the container they came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about fentanyl lozenges and other medicines and methods of pain relief.

You can get useful information from these organisations.

www.actiq.co.uk/patient.html

NHS Direct

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

0845 4647

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

WellChild 
the national charity for sick children

(Version 1, February 2008) © NPPG, RCPCH and WellChild 2008, all rights reserved.

We have written this leaflet to help you understand more about the medicine you are giving to your child. We take great care to make sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is therefore important that you follow the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, as they understand your child's illness. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Note that this leaflet applies to the use of medicines in the UK; it may not apply in other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), The Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading the leaflet.