

The Gallus Detox Guide to: **Fentanyl Recovery**



Gallus
— MEDICAL —

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Thank You

Thank you for downloading our premium resource guide on fentanyl recovery. Even though fentanyl can be used to treat severe pain, the substance is highly addictive. Recreational fentanyl use can quickly and easily lead to addiction, overdose, and even death.

We hope that learning more about fentanyl, its effects on the brain, and how the drug causes addiction and overdose will help encourage people to seek detox care and get the help they need. That's why we created this guide.

Using fentanyl recreationally and becoming addicted to the substance can be deadly. Luckily, our medical detox program has helped many successfully detox from fentanyl. We can help you, your friend, or a loved one do the same.

Contact us directly at **866-296-5242** to learn more.

Wishing you and yours a healthy, enjoyable, sober, and purposeful life,

The Gallus Detox Team



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Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid about 50 times more potent than heroin and 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. While doctors can legally prescribe fentanyl to treat severe pain, prescription drugs are often diverted for recreational use. In some cases, fentanyl is made illegally and sold on the streets.

Opioid use disorder (OUD) is the clinical diagnosis for a person who continues to use fentanyl or another opioid despite negative personal, social, or professional consequences. More than two million Americans and over sixteen million people globally struggle with an opioid use disorder.

In 2020, more than 56,000 Americans died from [synthetic opioid overdoses](#), according to U.S. government statistics. Statistics show that fentanyl is linked to the highest number of opioid-related deaths.

What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is in a class of natural and synthetic drugs known as opioids. Other opioids include heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone, hydrocodone, and oxycodone.

While opioids like morphine and codeine are derived naturally from the opium poppy plant, fentanyl is manufactured in a lab, making it a synthetic opioid. Despite this difference, natural opioids and synthetic opioids have the same chemical structure.

Doctors prescribe pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl to treat patients with advanced-stage cancer pain, post-surgical pain, and, in some cases, patients with chronic pain who cannot tolerate hydrocodone, oxycontin, or other opioid pain relievers.

Forms of prescribed fentanyl include injections, skin patches, or lozenges.

Fentanyl is effective if used as prescribed, but even pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl can be fatal if misused. Unfortunately, illegal fentanyl has become popular for recreational use due to its powerful effects. Fentanyl sold on the [illegal drug market](#) causes more drug overdose deaths in the U.S. than any other drug.

Manufacturers of illegal fentanyl often mix the drug with other psychoactive drugs like cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and MDMA (ecstasy), making the product more potent, more addictive, and more deadly. A person buying street fentanyl does not know what the drug contains, which increases their risk of overdose.

Recreational users often buy street fentanyl as a nasal spray, eye drops, powder, spiked on paper, or pill form.

Not all fentanyl used recreationally is made in illegal labs. Pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl has a high diversion rate, meaning people with access to prescription opioids are moving this type of fentanyl into the illegal drug market, as well.



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Fentanyl Side Effects

While most of those buying and using fentanyl illegally seek its psychoactive effects, including euphoria or pain relief, the drug may also deliver [undesirable effects](#).

The Drug Enforcement Administration's [fentanyl fact sheet](#) says common side effects of fentanyl may include:

- Euphoria
- Relaxation
- Pain relief
- Sedation
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Urinary retention
- Pupillary constriction
- Respiratory depression

Chronic constipation is another common complaint from those taking opioid pain medications. Harvard health statistics find that about 94 percent of cancer patients taking opioids for pain and 41 percent of patients taking opioids for non-cancer pain experience constipation.

How Fentanyl Affects the Brain

Like other opioid drugs, chemical compounds in fentanyl attach to opioid receptors in the brain that regulate emotions and pain. When triggered, opioid receptors block pain signals and deliver feelings of intense pleasure.

When an individual takes fentanyl or any addictive substance regularly, the brain adapts to its presence and demands increasingly higher doses to deliver the desired effect. This effect is called tolerance and is the first step towards [dependence and addiction](#).

Once the body and brain reach the stage of requiring opioid use regularly, the user may be unable to feel pleasure or even a sense of normalcy without the drug. If a person stops using the addictive substance at this stage, they will experience withdrawal symptoms, some of which can be deadly.

Withdrawal is one reason that it is dangerous to stop or reduce opioid use abruptly. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns that serious symptoms like severe pain, mental distress, and suicidal thoughts and actions can result from a discontinuation or rapid decrease in the dose. Medical supervision is critical to ensure the user's safety and help [manage their discomfort](#).



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Why is Fentanyl So Dangerous?

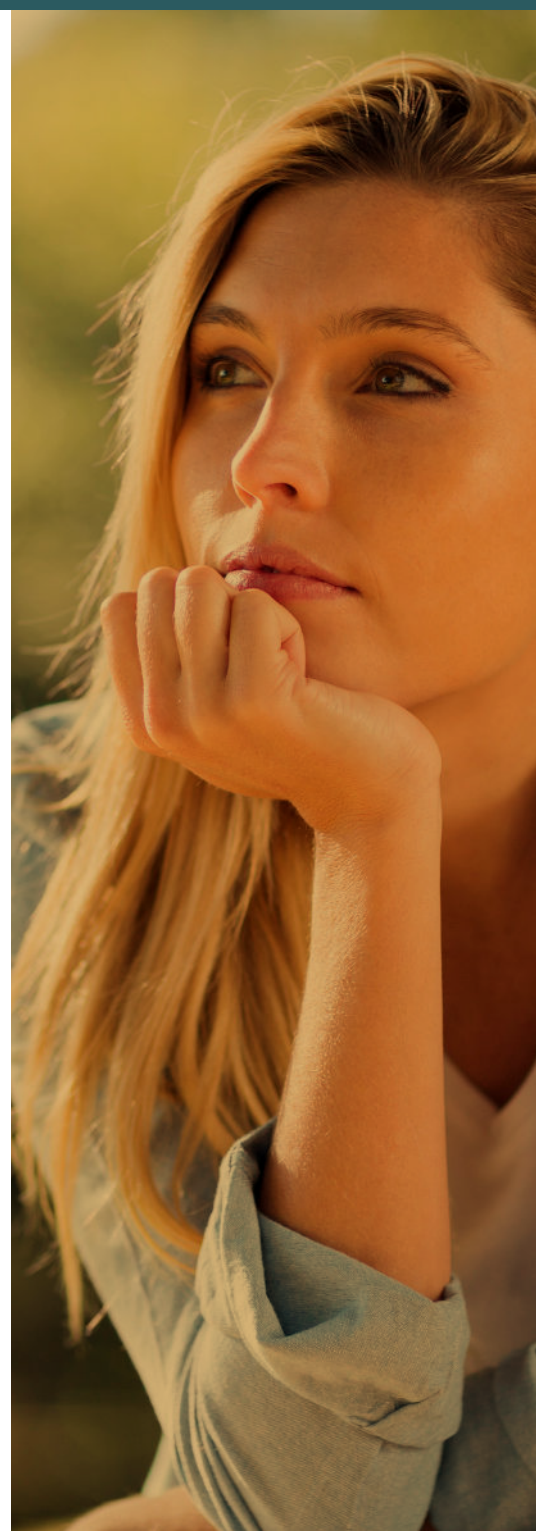
The effects of fentanyl are fast. Within minutes of taking the drug, users may experience a sense of euphoria, well-being, and reduced pain. However, fentanyl can also suppress the respiratory system to dangerously low levels, causing breathing to slow or even stop.

While an average respiratory rate is 12-20 breaths per minute, a breathing rate under 12 is abnormal and potentially life-threatening. Abnormally slow breathing can deprive the brain of sufficient oxygen and may result in coma, brain damage, or death. This condition, called bradypnea, is one of the most dangerous side effects of opioid use.

Why is Fentanyl Use So Widespread?

Doctors have legitimately prescribed fentanyl for several decades. Although the migration of fentanyl into the U.S. street drug market probably started earlier, it first caught the attention of drug enforcement personnel around 2013. At the time, fentanyl was most often added to or sold as heroin.

Fentanyl is attractive to those who produce illegal drugs because it is so potent, making a little go a long way. Illegal drug makers create a cheaper, more concentrated product by adding a small amount of fentanyl to heroin or other substances.



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Fentanyl is cheap to make, readily available, and powerful

Most people using an illegal drug seek the same thing: short-lived euphoria, intense happiness, and physical or mental pain relief. Drug users want the most significant high for the least amount of money possible. Fentanyl provides just that: an intense high at a relatively low cost.

Drug traffickers know what their customers want, and by using low amounts of highly potent fentanyl, they can deliver a cost-effective product that satisfies their market. Even if certain drugs are in short supply, drug dealers can mix readily available fentanyl with heroin, meth, cocaine, or ecstasy to meet the market demand.

Unlike heroin, there is no shortage of fentanyl. Heroin is expensive to cultivate and produce, while there is a cheap, ready supply of fentanyl flowing into the U.S., primarily from China and Mexico.

Even drug users who try to avoid fentanyl because they know it is dangerous may unwittingly take a product laced with the drug. There is no way for a person buying a street drug to know if it contains unwanted additives. A person who takes their usual dose of "heroin" may be ingesting a deadly amount of fentanyl.

Carfentanil is a derivative of fentanyl but even more deadly, with experts warning it is about 100 times more toxic than fentanyl. Toxicologists estimate an amount of carfentanil the size of a grain of sand is enough to kill a person. As with fentanyl, drug dealers often mix small amounts of carfentanil with heroin or other drugs to make a potent, less expensive product.

The U.S. government continues to work with China to try to reduce the number of synthetic opioids flooding the U.S. market. Government officials are also urging China to label fentanyl as a controlled substance, which would make it easier to prosecute those making and selling it illegally.



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Fentanyl addiction can happen very quickly

Opioids are highly addictive in a short amount of time. The [American Psychiatric Association](#) warns physical dependence on fentanyl and other opioids can develop within four to eight weeks. Once a person becomes physically dependent on opioids, they will experience severe withdrawal symptoms if they abruptly stop taking the drug.

Withdrawal side effects can include pain, chills, cramps, diarrhea, vomiting, and intense cravings, discouraging some users from quitting out of fear of the withdrawal process.

People who misuse prescription opioids can become addicted just as quickly as those who use illegal opioids and risk the same side effects when attempting to quit. The American Medical Association (AMA) estimates that up to 20 percent of those who take prescription opioids become addicted.

Statistics indicate that a large percentage of people who depend on opioids begin taking heroin if they lose their access to prescription pain killers. The AMA warns almost half of those who use heroin started with an addiction to opioids prescribed to manage pain.

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Stricter restrictions on prescription pain medications

Although doctors still write millions of prescriptions for opioids every year, the fear of legal action has caused some doctors to stop prescribing opioids. Beginning in 2016, state and federal legislators began enacting legally enforceable restrictions limiting the dosage and duration of opioid prescriptions. Commonly, opioid medications are prescribed for seven days only.

While these tighter laws do not apply to active cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care, those with severe pain from an injury, illness, or chronic pain may find it challenging to get the pain relief they need.

Health experts recognized the soaring numbers of opioid addiction long before the 2016 crackdown, with many doctors choosing to stop or limit the number of prescriptions they wrote. When those with severe pain cannot obtain relief with less effective medications, many turn to illegal opioids or heroin.



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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, experts have continued to track a significant rise in substance abuse and mental health issues. Drug overdose deaths in the U.S. are at a [record high](#), with fentanyl and other synthetic opioids linked to about two-thirds of those deaths, according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

COVID-19 has caused many to face isolation, loss of their support network, depression, fear, and a lack of routine, all of which are risk factors for substance abuse. The inability to access treatment programs or support groups has been devastating for those seeking recovery. Fortunately, most treatment centers are now back to full operation.

If you have been using fentanyl or another dangerous substance to dull physical or psychological pain, reach out for help before it is too late.

Signs of Fentanyl-Based Opioid | Use Disorder

Because fentanyl is so potent, it does not take long to become physically and psychologically addicted to the drug. The current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) provides physician guidelines for diagnosing fentanyl-based or other opioid use disorders.

According to DSM-5 guidelines, OUD is “a problematic pattern of opioid use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress.” Patients who have at least two of the following symptoms within twelve months may [have an OUD](#):

1. Individuals take more opioids than they need or want or take them for longer than desired
2. Individuals try to lessen their opioid use unsuccessfully
3. Individuals spend much of their time trying to locate more opioids
4. Cravings for opioids are frequent
5. Individuals struggle with work and family commitments, as well as interpersonal relationships
6. Despite personal and professional challenges, individuals continue taking opioids
7. Individuals stop engaging in other activities to take more opioids
8. Opioid use leads to risky behavior, like driving under the influence
9. Individuals continue their opioid use even though they are aware of the harm the drug is causing
10. Individuals experience tolerance
11. Individuals experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop using opioids



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Signs of a Fentanyl Overdose

Thousands of people worldwide die from a fentanyl overdose. Signs of [opioid overdose](#) may include:

- **Slow, shallow breathing**
- **Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”**
- **Falling asleep or loss of consciousness**
- **Choking or gurgling sounds**
- **Limp body**
- **Pale, blue, or cold skin**

An overdose may cause breathing to slow or stop, causing hypoxia or insufficient oxygen in body tissues to sustain bodily functions. Hypoxia can quickly cause significant organ damage and may lead to a coma or permanent brain damage.

An overdose is a [life-threatening medical emergency](#), but [rapid intervention](#) may save the person's life. Naloxone is an FDA-approved medication that can reverse the overdose if administered quickly.

Many U.S. states allow private citizens to purchase naloxone in the nasal spray form called Narcan. All 50 states protect a person who [administers naloxone](#) “in good faith” from civil or criminal liability. It can take more than one dose to reverse a fentanyl overdose.

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Substance use disorders can involve dependence on legal or illegal drugs or alcohol. It is common for a person to be dependent on one or [more substances simultaneously](#). For those diagnosed with more than one disorder, known as dual diagnosis or co-occurring disorder, treatment must address them all for the best results.

It is critical for those struggling with a fentanyl-based use disorder or another substance use disorder to understand that these disorders are highly treatable.

Recovery from fentanyl-based use disorder begins with [detoxification](#), known as detox. Detox is a medically supervised process to wean the patient from fentanyl safely. Careful supervision of the patient's vital signs and administration of approved medications ensure that the patient is safe and as comfortable as possible during withdrawal. At Gallus Medical Detox, we specialize in [safely helping patients through the detoxification process](#).



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What is the Gallus Method of Opioid Detox?

We're proud to offer our renowned detox program, the [Gallus Method](#), to opioid use disorder patients. Our compassionate team at Gallus delivers outstanding clinical expertise using evidence-based medical protocols to support each patient comfortably through the withdrawal process. Our top priority is each patient's care, dignity, and comfort at all times.

Fear of withdrawal symptoms is the number one reason those with opioid use disorders do not seek treatment. Our protocol reduces those symptoms by [40 percent](#), making the experience much more tolerable. As Darwin, a valued [Gallus patient alumnus](#), says, "Thank you for making this process gentle and easy."

If you have an opioid use disorder, do not let shame or fear of withdrawal stop you from achieving the quality of life you deserve. Trust Gallus to guide you safely through [opiate detoxification](#) to get you on your road to long-term recovery.

Contact us today for more information by calling (888) 306-3122.

Future articles will explore why the fear of withdrawal keeps people from seeking treatment and why fentanyl use is so widespread, so come back often for updates.

Quick Facts About Fentanyl & The Detoxification Process

- Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine
- Doctors use pharmaceutical fentanyl to treat severe pain
- People use manufactured fentanyl recreationally to experience heroin-like effects
- More than 150 people die everyday from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl
- During fentanyl detox, medical personnel wean individuals off fentanyl using medications to reduce cravings and relieve symptoms of withdrawal
- Quitting fentanyl cold turkey can lead to overdose and death
- Fentanyl withdrawal symptoms can begin anywhere from 8 to 24 hours after the last use
- Fentanyl withdrawal symptoms can include insomnia, anxiety, vomiting, muscle stiffness, watery eyes, diarrhea, excessive sweating, and hot and cold flashes
- Detoxing from fentanyl can last up to several weeks depending on how the body responds to the medication used to relieve withdrawal symptoms
- The Gallus Detox method uses medical protocols and evidence-based tools and resources to help people experience a safe, comfortable, and smooth detoxification process



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Get Your Life Back

Fentanyl addiction can take over your life, but our team can help you get your life back on track. We are dedicated to making the detox process as comfortable and safe as possible. Our Gallus Method can reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms by 40 percent. Come recover in a safe space with compassionate care from knowledgeable staff members who are here for your every need. [Contact us today to learn more.](#)

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