



Fentanyl is a strong opioid medication given through an IV. It offers a medium amount of pain relief. Fentanyl dulls your pain without the numbing effect of an epidural; it will not take all of your pain away. Fentanyl is not as effective for pain relief when your labour is long or difficult. Fentanyl does not increase the chance of an assisted delivery (e.g., forceps) or a cesarean delivery. Fentanyl will not cause addiction or overdose when administered by your healthcare provider during labour.

## How is it given?

Fentanyl in labour is given to you in a way that is safe for you and your baby. There are two ways it can be given:

1. Your healthcare provider can give you Fentanyl in your hand or arm through an intravenous (IV)
2. You can give yourself Fentanyl using a “Patient-Controlled Analgesia” (PCA). PCA works by allowing you to control the number of Fentanyl doses you get each hour. You cannot give yourself too much Fentanyl because the PCA is set to only allow safe doses over a set time interval.

## Side effects of Fentanyl for you

- You may become sleepy and relaxed
- Your breathing may slow down; you may need to be given oxygen and be monitored
- You may feel sick to your stomach
- You may feel itchy

## Side effects of Fentanyl for your baby

Fentanyl crosses the placenta and goes to your baby.

- Your baby may be sleepy and not breathe well at birth
- Your baby may have a lower heart rate at birth
- If you have a large dose of Fentanyl in labour your baby's breathing may need to be monitored for several hours after birth
- Your baby may have trouble starting breastfeeding because they are sleepy; you may need help from your nurse or lactation consultant to get your baby to breastfeed.

## For more information

Ask your healthcare provider if you can speak with an anesthesiologist.