

Information about Intravenous Fentanyl

What is Fentanyl?

It is a drug that is a powerful pain reliever (narcotic). It may be offered to you to help you cope better with the pain of labor. Some women say it takes the edge off the pain and helps them to cope better. It will take most of the pain away but not all of it. Doses that would take away all your labor pain would make you very sleepy and would decrease your ability to breathe. This could be dangerous for you.

How is it given?

It is given to you in a way so it is safe for you and your baby.

- ▶ First your nurse puts a tube in your hand or arm called an intravenous or IV.
- ▶ Your nurse, doctor, or midwife gives you the drug through this tube or you can give yourself this drug through the IV by using a pump that you control. It is called a patient-controlled pump. If you are using a pump you cannot give yourself too much of the drug because the pump is set to only allow safe doses.

Side effects of Fentanyl

- ▶ You may become sleepy.
- ▶ Your breathing may slow down. Some women need to be given some oxygen and be watched closely if this happens.
- ▶ You may feel sick to your stomach. This happens less often with Fentanyl than with other narcotics.

Side effects cont'd...

- ▶ Fentanyl crosses the placenta and goes to your baby. As a result, your baby may be sleepy and not breathe well at birth. If this happens your baby may be given a drug that helps called Naloxone.. Naloxone is given to your baby by an injection into the muscle of her or his leg. Sometimes, if you have needed a large dose of fentanyl, your baby's breathing may have to be watched closely for several hours.
- ▶ Your baby may have some trouble starting breast feeding because she/he is sleepy and you may need more help to get your baby to breast feed. Your nurse and/or lactation consultant will be able to help you get breast-feeding started.

What does it not do?

- ▶ Fentanyl will not take all your pain away.
- ▶ Fentanyl does not give pain relief so your doctor/midwife can help your baby be born by the use of forceps or vacuum.
- ▶ If your labor is very long it may not be as helpful later on and you may need a different form of pain relief.