

NHS England Guidance: Medicines of Low Value

FENTANYL IMMEDIATE RELEASE FORMULATIONS

Summary

Routine prescribing of immediate release fentanyl formulations is not recommended in primary care. This is in line with the NHS England guidance of items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care (1).

- New Patients: Prescribers should not initiate immediate release fentanyl formulations any new patients (1).
- Existing patients: Patient on long-term immediate release fentanyl formulations should be reviewed by a specialist in pain management (1).

These recommendations do not apply to patients undergoing palliative care treatment (1).

NHS England category: Items which are clinically effective but where more cost-effective products are available, including products that have been subject to excessive price inflation (1).

Fentanyl is a strong opioid analgesic. It is available as an immediate release substance in various dosage forms; tablets, lozenges, films and nasal spray. Patients who require immediate release fentanyl for pain management should always be monitored by specialist pain teams in secondary/tertiary care to ensure that the medication is used appropriately.

If a request is presented for any new patients, primary care prescribers should seek clarification as to why the patient is not initiated on a more suitable immediate release opioid such as morphine sulphate 10mg/5mL oral solution (or equivalent).

Deprescribing advice (1)

Immediate release fentanyl products are licensed only for the management of breakthrough pain in adult patients using opioid therapy for chronic cancer pain. Use outside of the license (e.g. for non-cancer pain or for patients not taking at least 60mg of oral morphine daily or equivalent) has safety implications and should be reviewed.

Patient factors influence the deprescribing methodology of immediate release fentanyl. It would be advisable to request for specialist input to support the deprescribing of patients using immediate release fentanyl.

References

1. **NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners.** *Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs.* s.l. : NHS England, 30 November 2017.