

# The Medical Letter®

## On Drugs and Therapeutics

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### IN BRIEF

## Fentanyl Sublingual Tablets (*Abstral*) for Breakthrough Cancer Pain

The FDA has approved the marketing of fentanyl sublingual tablets (*Abstral* – ProStrakan) for treatment of breakthrough pain in adult cancer patients who are already receiving and are tolerant to opioid therapy. It is the fourth transmucosal formulation of fentanyl to become available in the US for this indication.<sup>1-3</sup>

**Table 1. Transmucosal Fentanyl Products**

Drug	Formulation	Cost <sup>1</sup>
<b>Lozenge</b>		
OTFC – generic <i>Actiq</i> (Cephalon)	200, 400, 600, 800, 1200, 1600 mcg lozenges	\$16.88-43.19 43.20-123.41
<b>Sublingual tablet</b>		
<i>Abstral</i> (ProStrakan)	100, 200, 300, 400, 600, 800 mcg sublingual tabs	16.15-42.24
<b>Buccal tablet</b>		
<i>Fentora</i> (Cephalon)	100, 200, 400, 600, 800 mcg buccal tabs	21.73-63.23
<b>Buccal soluble film</b>		
<i>Onsolis</i> (Meda)	200, 400, 600, 800, 1200 mcg buccal soluble film	23.33-67.08

OTFC - Oral transmucosal fentanyl citrate

1. Cost of the lowest to the highest dosage strength lozenge, tablet or film, based on the most recent (March 31, 2011) data from retail pharmacies nationwide available from Wolters Kluwer Health.

The manufacturer recommends an initial dose of 100 mcg, a maximum of 2 doses per breakthrough pain episode, and use for no more than 4 breakthrough pain episodes per day. As with all formulations of fentanyl, strong inhibitors of CYP3A4 such as clarithromycin (*Biaxin*, and others) or itraconazole (*Sporanox*, and others) can increase serum concentrations of the drug to levels that can cause respiratory depression even in opioid-tolerant patients. A single dose of any formulation of transmucosal fentanyl could be fatal for a child.

1. Fentanyl buccal tablet (*Fentora*) for breakthrough pain. *Med Lett Drugs Ther* 2007; 49:78.
2. Drugs for pain. *Treat Guidel Med Lett* 2010; 8:25.
3. Fentanyl buccal soluble film (*Onsolis*) for breakthrough cancer pain. *Med Lett Drugs Ther* 2010; 52:30.

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