

## Patient information

# Why do I need to use Fentanyl patches?

Fentanyl patches are used to control on-going moderate to severe pain. They are not used for pain that only lasts for a short time. You will be given different, quick acting pain relief to take for breakthrough pain if required. Fentanyl is only prescribed for patients who have previously tolerated opioids.

N.B. Opioids are natural or synthetic chemicals that deliver opium like effects.

### Other names for this medication include:

- Durogesic DTrans
- Matrifen
- Tilofyl

### Where should I apply the patch?

Apply the patch to clean, dry, non-irradiated skin. The sticky surface of the patch should be applied on a flat area of the torso or the upper arm. The use of soaps, lotions or oils should be avoided over the area where the patch is applied. The skin must be completely dry before applying the patch.

### How long does a Fentanyl patch last?

Each patch will last for 3 days (72 hours). Change your patch (or patches) every third day. Try to do this at the same time of day. It is useful to mark the start date and time on a calendar. It is important to follow the correct frequency for patch application.

## **How do I apply and remove patches safely?**

- 1 Wash your hands. Choose a place on the torso or upper arm. Avoid skin that has cuts, scars, spots or if it is particularly hairy. Clean the skin with water only and make sure it is cool and dry.
- 2 Tear open the pouch of the new patch. Avoid touching the sticky side of the patch. Peel off the plastic backing and stick the patch on to the clean area of skin. Press it on firmly. Wash your hands. Keep the empty pouch.
- 3 On the third day of wearing your patch: Wash your hands. Take off the old patch, fold it in half so that it sticks together and put it back in its original pouch. The used pouch can be put in the bin with your household rubbish.

Always apply a new patch to a different area of skin than previously used this helps to avoid skin irritation.

***Always remove the old patch before applying the new one.***

## **How quickly do Fentanyl patches work?**

Before starting to use a Fentanyl patch you will usually have been taking other types of opioid medicines. Your medical practitioner will use this information to calculate the starting dose of Fentanyl patch. Your patch will take approximately 12 to 24 hours to reach peak pain controlling levels. During this time you may have been instructed to continue to use other opioid medication.

## **How long will I have to wear Fentanyl patches for?**

If the patch is helpful you may be taking it for many months, so you will need a repeat prescription from your GP.

## **Do I need any tests whilst I am using a Fentanyl patch?**

No, you will not need any special checks whilst you are taking this medication.

## **Are there are side effects?**

All drugs have side effects, but not everyone will experience them. Some of the side effects are:

- **Constipation:** Fentanyl tends to be less constipating than some other strong pain medicines but you may need to take a laxative regularly.
- **Sleepiness:** This is uncommon but, if you become unusually sleepy or muddled, you may need the Fentanyl dose reduced. Contact you doctor.
- **Skin rash / irritation:** If you develop itching or redness under the patch, tell your doctor.

## **Signs and symptoms of Fentanyl overdose:**

- Trouble breathing or shallow breathing
- Tiredness
- Extreme sleepiness or sedation
- Inability to think, walk or talk normally
- Feeling faint, dizzy or confused
- Vivid / bad dreams

***If any of the above are noted contact your GP or seek immediate medical advice***

## **Heat effects**

The patches are waterproof so you can have a shower or bath or go swimming. Avoid too much direct heat like a hot water bottle, electric blanket, heat lamp or hot spa bath as this affects the way the medicine is released from the patch. If you develop a fever try to keep your temperature down and contact you doctor.

## **What should I do if I am still experiencing pain when using a Fentanyl patch?**

When you start Fentanyl (or have a dose increase) it takes time to work. You will be prescribed extra pain medicine to take if you need it until your patch is working.

Practice non-pharmacological techniques that you may have been taught such as relaxation, using TENS, pacing activities, managing flare-ups.

If your pain is not well controlled and you need to take more than 2 - 3 doses of extra pain medicine a day please ask your GP to review your Fentanyl patch dose.

## **Can I drink alcohol whilst using a Fentanyl patch?**

If the Fentanyl patch makes you feel tired or gives you other side effects, then drinking alcohol may increase these side effects. Because of this, we advise that you should avoid drinking alcohol.

## **Is it safe for me to drive or operate machinery whilst I'm using Fentanyl patches?**

Fentanyl patches may cause drowsiness. If you feel affected by this, we advise that you should not drive until the effects have worn off.

## **Is it safe for me to take other medicines whilst I'm receiving treatment with a Fentanyl patch?**

Before you take any other prescribed medicines or buy any new medicines – including herbal remedies – tell your doctor or pharmacist that you are using a Fentanyl patch and ask their advice.

## **What should I do if a patch falls off or I have forgotten to change it?**

Stick a new patch on as soon as you can, following the advice above on applying and removing patches.

You may need to take extra pain medicine until your patch becomes effective. If you do not have a supply of breakthrough pain medicine contact your GP for advice.

***Always make sure you remove your old patch.***

## **Stopping using Fentanyl patches**

You must not suddenly stop your Fentanyl patch as you may experience withdrawal effects such as:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Anxiety
- Shivering

## Remember

This medicine has been prescribed for **you**. It should not be taken by anyone who has not had it prescribed by a doctor.

## Storage

***Please keep your patches safe and out of the reach of children. If you dispose of an old patch into a rubbish bin ensure it cannot be easily accessed by children.***

## Warning

If your chronic pain escalates do not apply an additional Fentanyl patch. Any alterations in patch strength must be authorised by a doctor.

## Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions, please speak to your doctor, or contact:

Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Department of Pain Medicine

Telephone 01284 712528

***KEEP ALL MEDICINES OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN***

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)*

*<https://www.accessable.co.uk>*

