

- bottle, or heat pad
- soak in a hot bath, use a sauna or sunbathe while using Fentanyl patches

**DO seek help if you develop a fever. Try to keep your temperature down.**

### Side effects

In addition to the usual side effects of strong opioids (constipation, drowsiness and nausea), some patients experience skin rashes or irritation. This may be an allergic reaction to the adhesive on the patch - please report this to your doctor or nurse.

### Storage and disposal

Your Fentanyl patches need to be kept in a safe place out of the reach of children. Used patches still contain some Fentanyl so must be kept away from children/pets. Patches should be disposed of carefully by folding them in half to stick firmly together and replacing them in their packet. The packet can then be placed in the bin for household rubbish. Please return any unused patches to the pharmacy.

### Frequently asked questions

**Q. What do I do if I forget to change a patch or a patch has fallen off?**

A. Put on a new patch as soon as you realise. If there has been a long delay you may need to take extra doses of immediate release pain medicine whilst waiting for the level of Fentanyl in your body to increase again.

**Q. What can I do if my patch falls off frequently?**

A. Inform your doctor or nurse who can give you a tape to stick over the patch. Clipping

hairy skin may also help but do not use shaving gel/foam or soap.

**Q. Can I go for a swim or take a shower?**

A. Yes. Patches are waterproof.

**Q. Can I drive?**

A. Yes. Please read the DVLA information leaflet [www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law](http://www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law)

### Contact details

People to contact if you have any problems or concerns about your medication:

**Your GP**

**NHS 111** - 'Out of Hours' service for urgent medical help or advice

**Your Community Palliative Care Nurse**

**Specialist**

**St Margaret's Hospice 24 hours advice line**

0845 070 8910

# Fentanyl Patches for Palliative Care Patients

## Palliative Care

*This leaflet has been produced by NHS Somerset, St Margaret's Hospice, Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust working in partnership.*

*Based on the Pan Birmingham Cancer Network leaflet: "Use of Fentanyl Patches" (2010).*

## Fentanyl patches for palliative care patients

This leaflet contains information for patients who are prescribed Fentanyl patches.

It should be read in conjunction with the patient information leaflet 'Strong opioids for palliative care patients' for those who are prescribed strong opioids, for example, Morphine, Oxycodone or Fentanyl. It provides additional information on the use of immediate release pain medication, possible side effects, cautions and frequently asked questions about strong opioids including Fentanyl.

### What is a Fentanyl patch?

Fentanyl is a strong opioid medicine used to control pain, which does not respond well to weaker pain medicines. The drug is contained within a sticky patch which when applied to your body gradually passes through your skin into your bloodstream. Once in your bloodstream, fentanyl acts within your body to relieve pain.

### Why have I been prescribed Fentanyl patches?

Fentanyl is most useful for patients with 'stable' pain (not requiring frequent changes of dose). It is also prescribed for patients who have difficulty swallowing tablets, cannot tolerate Morphine or whose kidneys are not working well.

### How is Fentanyl taken?

There are different brands of fentanyl patch available, such as Matrifen®, Durogesic®. Where possible you will be given the same brand each time. If you notice that your patches are different from those you usually use, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice.

Fentanyl patches come in a variety of strengths: 12, 25, 50, 75 and 100 mcg/hr. Check the name and dose on your medicine box.

There is no fixed or maximum dose of Fentanyl. You may even need more than one patch at a time to make up the correct dose.

Each patch remains in place for three days (72 hours). It takes at least 12 hours for the level of Fentanyl to reach its maximum after a patch has been applied or the dose has been changed. It will also take over 12 hours for the effects of a patch to wear off after it is removed.

### Immediate Release (IR) opioids

Most patients will also be prescribed a fast acting strong pain medicine such as Oramorph, IR Oxycodone or Fentanyl tablets to take with their Fentanyl patch in case they get 'breakthrough' (extra/sudden) pain. These act quickly but the effects also wear off quite quickly over two to four hours.

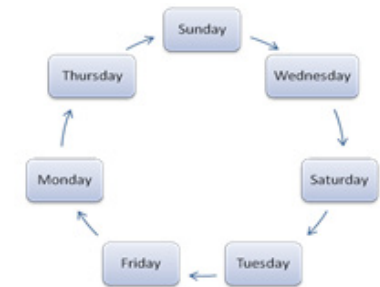
### How do I use a Fentanyl patch?

Change your fentanyl patch every 72 hours at roughly the same time of day. For example, if a patch is applied to the skin on Monday at 10am it should be replaced with a new patch on Thursday at 10am. Changing patches regularly like this will give you a consistent level of the medicine in the body.

If you are using more than one patch at a time then all the patches should be changed at the same time.

1. Take your old patch(es) off and fold each in half so that it sticks together.
2. Choose a place on the upper arm or upper body to stick the new patch. The skin should not have cuts, spots or other blemishes and not be too hairy. The area

3. Change the area where you stick the patch so that one area is not used by successive doses.
4. Peel the plastic backing off each new patch and stick firmly onto the chosen area of skin.
5. The following diagram may be helpful in reminding you when to next change your patch. Mark the day on the diagram when you first put on your patch(es). Follow the arrow to the next day shown. This is the day when you should next change your patch(es). Keep following the calendar in a clockwise direction.



### Precautions

When using Fentanyl patches it is very important that you **DO NOT**:

- let anyone else use your patch. Store and dispose of your used patches safely (see below).
- stick on any extra patches unless told to do so
- cut or divide the patch

Heat speeds up the release of Fentanyl from the patch, which may give you too high a dose. This may cause you to become unwell. Therefore **DO NOT**:

- apply immediately after a bath/shower – allow the skin to cool first
- apply direct heat to the area with the patch on with, for example, a hot water