

Patient information – Pharmacy Department

Safe use and disposal of your Fentanyl/Buprenorphine transdermal patches

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to give you a better understanding of how to use your transdermal patches as a method of pain control. This leaflet should be read together with the manufacturer's information leaflet. It will tell you how to apply, dispose of and store your transdermal patches safely, in order to prevent harm to yourself and others. It will also explain the common side effects to look out for.

All about your Fentanyl / Buprenorphine transdermal patches

Your fentanyl / buprenorphine patch is a medicated adhesive patch that is placed on the skin to deliver a specific dose of fentanyl / buprenorphine through the skin. Fentanyl and Buprenorphine are strong painkillers. The medicine works by passing slowly through your skin into your body to help relieve severe, long-term pain.

These patches are available in different strengths. Your doctor will prescribe the correct strength that is suitable for you; this means that they **must not** be handled or used by anyone other than yourself.

When you first start using your transdermal patch, or if you have had a dose increase, it can take up to 24 hours for the painkiller to start to work. Your doctor will give you extra painkillers to take if you need them, until your patch is working. If your pain is not well controlled when the patches start to work and you need to take more than 2 - 3 doses of extra painkiller a day, please contact your doctor.

How to store your transdermal patches safely

- Keep all patches, used and unused, out of the sight and reach of children and vulnerable adults.
- Check every day that the patch is stuck to your skin. If the patch falls off, dispose of it safely and apply a new patch. Make a note of the new day, date and time when you will need to change it.
- If your patches are out-of-date or you are told by your doctor that you no longer need to use them, take them to your local community pharmacy (local chemist) where they can be disposed of safely.

How to apply your transdermal patches safely

- Always apply the patch on a flat part of your upper body or arm. If your skin is very hairy, do not shave it as this can irritate the skin. Instead, trim the hair as close to your skin as possible before applying the patch.
- Make sure your skin is completely clean and dry before you put the patch on. Do not apply it straight after a hot bath or shower.
- If you need to clean your skin before you apply the patch, use cold water. Do not use soap or any other cleansers, creams, moisturisers, oils or talcum powder on the area before applying the patch.

- Use each patch once only, and never cut or divide the patch.
- Make sure that the patch will be covered by loose clothing and is not stuck under tight or elastic areas of your clothes (such as bra straps, cuffs or waistbands).
- Do not apply patches in the same place twice in a row.
- Do not apply the patches over any cuts, spots or other skin blemishes.
- Carefully peel the plastic backing away from the patch, trying not to touch the sticky side of the patch. Keep the plastic pouch that the patch came in – you can use this to put the old patch in when you change it for a new one.
- Press the sticky part of the patch onto your skin and hold it in place for at least 30 seconds, making sure it sticks well, especially at the edges.

How to dispose of your transdermal patches safely

- As soon as you take a patch off, fold it firmly in half so that the sticky side sticks to itself.
- Put it back in its original pouch and put the pouch in the bin with your household rubbish, out of the sight and reach of children and vulnerable adults.

Possible side effects of Fentanyl / Buprenorphine transdermal patch

Fentanyl / Buprenorphine transdermal patches may make you unusually drowsy, muddled or confused and can slow down your breathing. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, take the patch off and seek medical help straight away.

Other possible side effects include:

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Headaches and dizziness.
- Constipation.
- Skin irritation.

If you experience any of these symptoms or any other side effects, contact your GP. They will be able to advise you on how to relieve these symptoms or may be able to prescribe you with a different type of pain relief.

Important points to remember

- Your patch will state how long it should remain on your skin. Always make sure that you have removed your existing patch before applying a new one.
- If you are using more than one patch, change all your patches at the same time.
- When you apply a new patch, make a note of the new day, date and time that you will need to change it again.
- A patch could cause serious harm if it accidentally sticks to someone else's skin or is swallowed. **If this happens seek medical help immediately.**
- If you develop a fever whilst wearing the transdermal patch, this may affect the way the medicine passes through your skin. Remove the patch and contact your GP for advice.
- Do not expose the patch to direct heat, such as heating pads, electric blankets, hot water bottles, tanning lamps, intensive sun bathing, long hot baths, saunas or hot whirlpool spa baths. These may affect the way the medicine is absorbed through your skin.

