

OPIOID PATCH INFORMATION TO KEEP PATIENTS SAFE

You may find this information helpful if you are a patient who uses opioid patches (e.g., fentanyl patches/buprenorphine patches), or you care for someone who uses opioid patches. You should read the patient information leaflet in the packaging along with this information. Use the patch exactly as directed by your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

This patch is designed to provide you with better overall background pain relief. If you still experience pain throughout the day, you can take fast-acting painkillers exactly as advised by your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any queries or would like more information.



What do I need to know about opioid patches?

Using and disposing of your opioid patch safely

- Make sure you know how many patches to apply and how often you should apply them.
- Make sure you know the correct place on your body to apply the patch. When you change to your next patch, you should take the old one off and then apply the new patch to a different area of skin on your body.
- Where possible, you should use the same brand of patch each time. If you notice that your patch looks different from those that you are used to using, ask your pharmacist for advice.
- **Do not apply patch to broken or irritated skin.** Do not use the patch on skin that has undergone radiation therapy. Use the patch on non-hairy and dry skin. Cut any hair in the area with scissors. Do not shave the area before applying a patch as this may irritate the skin.
- **Never cut the patch.**
- Make sure you **follow the correct process for applying the patch:**
 - **Remove the old patch** and **carefully fold it over** so the sticky sides are stuck together. Put it back in its original pouch.
 - **Make sure you safely dispose of USED patches out of the reach/discovery of children/animals.** This may be in a bin with household rubbish. Unused patches must be returned to a pharmacy for safe disposal if no longer needed.
 - Apply new patch (avoid touching sticky sides).
 - Press the patch firmly in place for 30–60 seconds.
 - Wash hands afterwards.
- It may be helpful to use a calendar to record the day you put the patch on.
- The patch may not start or stop working straight away. You may need to take additional fast-acting painkillers when starting the patch, as advised by your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
- If the patch falls off, start another patch. Do not re-use patch. If the edge of the patch starts to peel, use suitable skin-friendly tape (e.g. white surgical tape) to secure the patch.



Keeping yourself and others safe

- **Keep out of sight/reach/discovery of children and animals. Seek immediate medical attention if patch is swallowed, or it is applied to the skin of anyone other than yourself.** Patches are not plasters! Incidents have involved children mimicking what they have seen others do. **Deaths** have occurred where children have removed patches from co-sleeping adults. Wearing an item of clothing over the patch when sharing a bed with children or a partner is recommended. **Deaths** have also occurred where children have swallowed discarded/'fallen-off' patches. 
- **Seek medical attention straight away if the patch is swallowed** by yourself or others. If the patch sticks to the skin of anyone other than you, remove it and seek medical attention straight away.
- **Avoid placing heat sources against/near the patch**, e.g. hot water bottles, heat pads or heat blankets. Avoid hot tubs and saunas. Caution with long hot baths. Keep the patch area out of excessive sun. Store patches away from heat sources. **The body can absorb too much medicine if the patch gets too hot.** 

Signs and symptoms of too much medicine and what to do

- **Seek medical attention immediately if:**
 - feverish;
 - trouble breathing, or shallow/very slow breathing;
 - extreme sleepiness or sedation;
 - inability to think/walk/talk normally;
 - feeling faint, confused or more dizzy than usual.



Increased sleepiness and driving or operating machinery

- Opioid patches may make you **sleepy** and **affect your ability to drive/operate machinery.**
- **Do not drive/operate machinery if affected.**
- Drinking alcohol whilst using opioid patches can also make you more sleepy.



Taking other medicines and using medical services

- Use a regular community pharmacy and seek their advice when buying over the counter medicines/herbal products.
- Bring your medicines or a list of your current medicines with you if you come to clinic/hospital/attend out-of-hours services/dentist/A&E/for scans, X-rays or any hospital procedures. Opioid patches cannot be worn during an MRI scan.

Further information

- Fentanyl information leaflet for patients and caregivers (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency), available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/54730808e5274a1301000046/con437440.pdf>
- Fentanyl patch patient information leaflet, and Opioids and driving patient information leaflet (Velindre Cancer Centre), available at: www.velindrecc.wales.nhs.uk/palliative-care-1
- Drugs and driving: the law (Department for Transport), available at: www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law
- Opioids in Palliative Care – Patient Information Manual (AWMSG), available at: <https://awmsg.nhs.wales/medicines-appraisals-and-guidance/medicines-optimisation/patient-information-leaflets/>