

Opioid patches- Information to keep you safe

Fentanyl and buprenorphine patches are opioid medicines used to treat moderate to severe long-lasting pain.

It is important that you read the instructions every time you use a patch (see instructions on the patch, on the box, and in the leaflet that comes with your medicine).

You should know how often you should change your patch; it may help to use a calendar as a reminder.

Safety issues you need to be aware of:

Do not warm your patches or skin - This can cause a dangerous amount of medicine to come out of the patch and be absorbed by your body:

- Make sure the patch doesn't heat up (e.g. from hot-water bottle, electric blanket, long hot bath or hot tub).
- If you have a raised temperature (fever), seek medical advice.

Accidental patch transfer to someone else - A patch may cause serious harm if it accidentally touches or sticks to somebody else's skin or if a child puts it in their mouth. This could be life-threatening.

If this happens seek medical help immediately, by calling 999.

Signs of fentanyl or buprenorphine overdose

In the most serious cases, accidental transfer of patches can result in a dangerous overdose. Signs of an overdose are:

- difficulty breathing or weak breathing
- feeling very sleepy or confused
- slurred speech and extreme dizziness

If you have any of these effects, or suspect an overdose, remove the patch and seek medical help immediately (by calling 999 and requesting an ambulance).

Increased sleepiness: Opioid patches may make you sleepy and affect your ability to drive/operate machinery.

- Don't drive or operate machinery if affected
- Drinking alcohol whilst using opioid patches can also make you more sleepy.



It is important that you:

- ✓ **Use the same make of patch each time, where possible.** If you notice your patch looks different, ask your pharmacist for advice.
- ✓ **Always remove the old patch before applying the new one.**
 - Apply each new patch to a different area from the last one.
 - Make sure you know the correct place on your body to apply the patch.

Follow advice in the manufacturer's leaflet on the length of time you should leave before applying a patch to the same area.
- ✓ **Don't use cut or damaged patches.**
- ✓ **Do not apply the patch to broken, irritated or irradiated skin.** Ensure skin is non-hairy and dry before application. If necessary, cut hair with scissors; do not shave the area before applying a patch
- ✓ **Ensure the patch is stuck on securely:**
 - Apply the patch as soon as the pouch has been opened.
 - Press firmly in place with the palm of the hand for approximately 30 seconds.
 - Make sure it is stuck down, especially around the edges.
 - After you've applied the patch, wash your hands with clean water.
 - It may be helpful to use a calendar to record the day you put the patch on.
- ✓ **Remove and fold old patches:** After removing the patch; fold the sticky sides together and put back in the original sachet.
 - **Place in household rubbish ensuring it is out of reach and sight of children / animals (used patches will still contain opioid medication).**
- ✓ **If your patch falls off, put a new patch on and seek medical advice.**
- ✓ Store patches safely away from the reach or discovery of children. Do not let children see you apply patches or call them stickers, tattoos or plasters. Deaths have occurred where children have swallowed patches.



**If a patch is transferred to another person,
remove it immediately and seek medical advice, by calling 999.**

This leaflet has been adapted from MHRA fentanyl leaflet 2018.
Fentanyl skin patches: How to use and dispose of them safely October 2018