

## Fentanyl Patches: How to use safely

Fentanyl is an opioid (narcotic) pain medicine. One way to get the medicine into your body is by using a skin patch.

We use fentanyl patches to give a person a slow, constant flow of medicine for the relief of constant pain. We only give patches to people if they have been on some other opioids first.

The first patch may take up to 24 hours to give pain relief. Your doctor may have you take other pain medicine for the first day or if you have breakthrough pain. Your doctor will determine if you need one or more patches together to get the right dose.

### Tell your doctor

- all the medicine you take
- your medical conditions and allergies
- if you develop a rash or itchiness from the patch
- if you have uncontrolled pain

### Where to put the patch

Put the patch on skin that is:

- flat
- not damaged (no sores or cuts)
- not near a joint (such as shoulder, upper back, or upper arm)
- free of hair (You might need to clip the hair, but do not shave.)

### How to put the patch on

- Keep the patch in its package until you are ready to use it.
- Do not cut the patch.
- Clean the skin with warm water. Allow the skin to dry.
- Try not to touch the sticky side. If you touch the sticky side, rinse your hands using just water. (Soap, lotion, and alcohol increase the amount of medicine absorbed.)
- Press the patch in place for 30 seconds. Make sure that the edges are stuck to the skin.
- Rinse your hands right away using only water.
- If the patch becomes loose, tape the edges with first aid tape.

### Common side effects

Your healthcare team can help you look after with any of these side effects:

- hard stools / poop (constipation)
- upset stomach (nausea)
- throwing up (vomiting)
- feeling dizzy
- feeling sleepy
- headache
- sweating a lot
- feeling tired or weak

## Am I at risk for overdose?

Many people take opioids without any problems. While rare, overdose and addiction are possible. The best way to prevent either is to follow the instructions on the prescription, and watch for signs that you are getting too much opioid.

### When to get help

Remove the patch and get medical help right away if you have:

- signs of too much opioid
- a fever higher than 38.9°C (102°F)
- trouble going or hurts to go pee (urinate)
- very sleepy or cannot wake up

Signs of too much opioid:

- severe dizziness
- cannot stay awake
- seeing things that are not there (hallucinations)
- heavy or unusual snoring
- breathing slower than normal (less than 12 breaths in a minute)

## Did you know?

- Patches are usually changed every 3 days. Change patches at the same time of day.
- You can swim, shower or bathe with the patch in place. If the patch falls off, apply a new patch to another area of dry skin.

## Safety tips

- If you feel sleepy and/or dizzy, do not drive or work with machinery.
- Keep the patch away from heat such as heating pads, electric blankets, heat lamps, and hot tubs.  
(Heat increases the amount of medicine released from the patch, which can cause more side effects and/or overdose.)
- Do not eat **grapefruit** or drink grapefruit juice. Grapefruit can increase the amount of fentanyl in your blood.
- Have one doctor prescribe all of your pain medicine.
- Fill all prescriptions at one pharmacy.
- Follow the directions on the prescription. Do not change how much you take or how often you take it without talking to your doctor. This includes stopping the medicine.
- Return used and unused medicine to the pharmacy. Never use patches that are out of date.
- Never share pain medicine with or borrow from anyone.
- Keep fentanyl patches in place that is secure as well as out of reach and out of sight of children, teens, and pets.

See **Safe Disposal of Used Patches** on how to dispose of your patches safely by scanning this QR code



A QR code (short for 'quick response' code) is a type of barcode that you scan with your smart device's camera. Once scanned, it takes you to that web page or resource.