

# Fentanyl patches

(FEN – ta – nil)

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Fentanyl is an opioid (narcotic) pain medication. It gets into your system by using a skin patch. It is for individuals who have trouble taking pills, or find that their sleep or other activities are interrupted by the need to take pills.

Fentanyl patches are used to provide a slow, constant release of medication for the steady relief of pain. The patches cannot be used unless you have been on some other opioids long enough to know your reactions to these drugs.

One trade name of Fentanyl is Duragesic. You may need to use one or more patches together to get the right dose. Patches are usually replaced every 3 days. Change it at the same time of day.

## Reminders

Tell your doctor:

- all the medications you take (prescription and non-prescription)
- your medical conditions and allergies
- if you develop a rash or itchiness from the patch
- if you have breakthrough pain

Make sure that your partner or some person close to you knows that you wear the Fentanyl patch. Ask them to remove it from you if they find you too sleepy or confused. They need to know to seek medical help if this happens.

Do not drive or operate dangerous machinery until you know how Fentanyl affects you.

The first patch may take up to 24 hours to give pain relief. Your doctor may tell you to take other pain relieving drugs for the first 24 hours.

Fentanyl can cause constipation or hard stools. Eat a high fibre diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Drink plenty of fluids. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about taking laxatives or stool softeners.

## Call your doctor or seek medical help right away and remove the patch, if you have:

- a fever greater than 38°C or 100°F
- very slow breathing, sweating or confusion
- difficult or painful urination
- severe drowsiness

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## How to apply the Fentanyl Patch

- Do not take the patch out of its package until you are ready to use it. Do not cut the patch.
- The patches should be applied on unbroken skin. The area needs to be flat, hairless and away from a joint; such as shoulder, upper back or upper arm. You may need to clip hair, but do not shave.
- If you need to clean the skin before applying the patch use warm water only. Do not use soap, lotion, alcohol or other products on the area where the patch will be placed. Allow the skin to dry.
- Try not to touch the sticky side. If you do, rinse your hands with clear water only.
- Press the patch in place for 10 to 20 seconds. Make sure that the edges are stuck to the skin.
- Spraying the skin with becloforte inhaler (you will need a prescription) may reduce skin irritation and make the patch stick better.
- After the patch is on, wash your hands right away using only water. Do not use soap, because soap increases the amount of medication absorbed.

**Disposal of used patches:** Fold the used patch in half, so the sticky side sticks to itself. Seal used patches in a ziplock bag, in a safe place, until you return them to your pharmacy for disposal. Discuss proper disposal with your pharmacist.

## Reminders

- Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while using the patch.
- Do not let the patch come into contact with heat, such as heating pads, electric blankets, heat lamps and hot tubs. Heat increases the amount released from the patch, which could cause more side effects and/or overdose.
- You can swim, shower or bathe with the patch. If it falls off, apply a new patch to another area of dry skin. However, this will lead to running out early. Discuss with your doctor.
- To prevent accidental use by children or others in your house, all narcotics should be stored in a locked box (available at larger pharmacies or check the internet, search: “medication lock box”).
- Fentanyl is a controlled substance and is illegal for you to give or sell to anyone else.