

Contact details

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For further general health-related information, please ask the relevant department for an information prescription or contact:

The Health Information Centre
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Poole, Dorset BH15 2JB
Telephone: 01202 448003
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We can supply this information in other formats, in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. Please call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01202 448499, text 07758 272495 or email pals@poole.nhs.uk for advice.

If you wish to make any comments or to ask about any research evidence used to write this leaflet, please contact the Patient Experience team confidentially: phone 01202 448003, write to the Health Information Centre (address above), or email healthinfo@poole.nhs.uk.

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Forest Holme Hospice Patient information

How to use Fentanyl patches



This information will be useful to you if you have been prescribed fentanyl patches for pain relief. It describes how to use them and answers some questions you may have.



Can I drink alcohol? Yes, you can drink a small amount of alcohol with Fentanyl. However, you may feel more drowsy than usual.

Can I drive? Taking opioids doesn't automatically mean you can't drive. It is recommended that you don't drive during the first few days of starting or increasing a dose, and then initially drive in daytime hours and for short distances. You should inform your insurance company that you have been prescribed opioids. It is your legal responsibility to carry documentation as evidence that this is a prescribed medication.

Can I stop using my patch? Yes, but not suddenly, otherwise you may experience symptoms such as sweating, aching, pain or diarrhoea. Please contact your doctor or Palliative Care nurse who can help you do this safely.

Different brands of patch: There are a few different brands of Fentanyl patch available. Where possible, you should be given the same brand each time. However, if you notice that your patches look different, ask your doctor, Palliative Care nurse or pharmacist for advice.

Introduction

What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a drug used to treat moderate to severe pain. It is a strong painkiller related to morphine. The drug is contained within a sticky patch, and when applied to your body, gradually passes through your skin into your bloodstream and relieves pain.

How do I use a Fentanyl Patch?

- Change your patch every 72 hours (3 days) around the same time of day.
- If you are using more than 1 patch then all the patches should be changed at the same time.
- Wash your hands. Take your old patch(es) off and fold each patch in half so it sticks together and then discard in a bin away from children or pets.
- Choose a place on the upper arm or upper body to stick the new patch. The skin should not have cuts, spots or be inflamed. Excess hair can be removed with scissors. The area should be dry and clean.
- Change/alternate the area the patch is applied so that the same place is not used twice in a row.

What should I do if I still have pain whilst using a Fentanyl patch?

Fentanyl patches provide background pain relief. As well as your patch, you will also be given a quick acting painkiller in case you have pain despite the patch.

Examples include Oramorph, Sevredol and OxyNorm. Reasons you might get pain include:

- When starting to use Fentanyl patches, or if your dose is increased, it can take a day or more for you to feel the maximum benefit.
- You may experience pain while doing a particular activity.
- Sometimes you may experience pain without any obvious cause.

If you experience pain, please take a dose of your quick acting painkiller (follow instructions on the label). If you are requiring 2-3 extra doses of painkiller per day, please tell your doctor or Palliative Care nurse.

What should I do if my patch falls off or I forget to change it?

If a patch falls off before it needs changing or you forget to change it, stick a new patch on straight away and remember this replacement will need changing in 3 days.
NB: Fentanyl is safe to use in the bath or shower

Are there any side effects from Fentanyl patches?

Drowsiness: this sometimes occurs for the first 24-48 hours after starting or increasing the dose of a patch. If you are affected by this you should refrain from driving and not operate any dangerous machinery during this time.

Constipation: although less constipating than other painkillers, can cause symptoms. Please tell your doctor or Palliative Care nurse who can prescribe a laxative to help.

Skin rash/irritation: if you develop itching or redness under your patch, please contact your doctor or Palliative Care nurse.

Nausea or vomiting: These symptoms usually disappear after a few days. If you are troubled with this side effect, an anti-sickness tablet can be prescribed.

Less common side effects: a small number of people may feel restless or experience nightmares/hallucinations after starting Fentanyl. Please contact your doctor or Palliative Care nurse to discuss.

DO NOT let anyone else use your patch.

DO NOT cut or divide the patch.

DO NOT apply direct heat to the patch e.g. hot water bottle.