



Question: Can transdermal fentanyl patches be changed every 48 hours instead of every 72 hours?

February 2012

Summary

In the majority of patients, analgesia is maintained for the duration of the recommended 72 hours that the patch is in situ. However, some patients may require application of the transdermal patches at 48-hour intervals to maintain adequate analgesia,^{1,2,3,4,5,6} especially in early therapy.¹ Before the dosing interval is reduced, check that the patch is not exposed to a heat source (e.g. heat pad, hot water bottle, hot bath or the patient has pyrexia) that may increase the rate of absorption of fentanyl from the transdermal patch.⁷ An increase in dose may also be considered (see below).

Detailed Information

There are two brands of matrix transdermal fentanyl patches currently available in Ireland, Durogesic DTrans[®] transdermal patches¹ and Matrifen[®] transdermal patches². It has been suggested that up to 25% of patients with cancer pain may require more frequent application than 72 hourly.³ The Summary of Product Characteristics for Durogesic DTrans[®] transdermal patches recommends that early in therapy, some patients may not achieve adequate analgesia during the 48-72 hour period and may

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require a new patch to be applied at 48 hours rather than at 72 hours.¹ However, reducing the duration of application of a patch by replacing the system before the 72 hours may result in increased serum concentrations of fentanyl.¹ It is recommended that before shortening the dosing interval in patients not responding adequately to a given dose, an increase in dose should be evaluated so that patients can be maintained on a 72-hour regimen if possible.⁴ If the patient has a fever, or the patch is exposed to a heat source (e.g hot bath), the rate of absorption of fentanyl from the patch may be increased.⁵

References

- 1) Summary of Product Characteristics Durogesic DTrans Transdermal Patch. Available from www.medicines.ie. Last updated on the 02/12/2011.
- 2) Summary of Product Characteristics Matrifen Transdermal Patches. Available from www.medicines.ie. Last updated on the 31/01/2012.
- 3) Monograph Fentanyl. Martindale, the complete drug reference. Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed February 2012.
- 4) Monograph Fentanyl. American Hospital Formulary Services (AHFS). Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed February 2012.
- 5) Monograph Fentanyl. Micromedex 1.0. Available from www.tcd.ie/library. Accessed February 2012.
- 6) Monograph Fentanyl. Palliative Care Formulary. Available from www.palliativedrugs.com. Accessed February 2012.
- 7) Fentanyl. British National Formulary. Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed February 2012.