It is very important to dispose of used fentanyl transdermal patches safely because high quantities of fentanyl remain in the transdermal patches even after use.\(^1\)\(^,\)\(^2\) Patients receiving transdermal fentanyl should be carefully instructed in the proper use and disposal of the transdermal system.\(^3\) Patients should be advised to keep both used and unused fentanyl transdermal systems out of the reach of children and pets.\(^3\)

The product information for Matrifén® transdermal patches advises that “Used transdermal patches should be folded with the adhesive surfaces inwards, so the release membrane is not exposed and due to safety and environmental reasons, discarded according to local requirements or returned to the pharmacy.”\(^2\)

A recently updated Food and Drug Administration Drug Safety Communication recommended disposing of used patches by folding them in half with the sticky sides together, and then flushing them down a toilet.\(^4\) The FDA recognises that there are environmental concerns about flushing medicines down the toilet. However, the FDA believes that the risk associated with accidental exposure to fentanyl outweighs any potential risk associated with disposal by flushing. When the patches are no longer

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The information outlined above is intended for healthcare professionals only. The information outlined above is believed to accurately reflect the medical literature at the time of writing. Healthcare professionals must use their own judgment to determine the accuracy and relevance of the information. See www.olh.ie for full terms and conditions.
needed, disposing by flushing completely eliminates the risk of harm to people in the home.  

Fentanyl transdermal patches should be disposed of according to local policy in the hospital setting. Janssen-Cilag (manufacturer of Durogesic DTrans®) do not offer specific advice on denaturing the product, but it would seem reasonable to assume that disposal in an appropriate pharmaceutical denaturing bin would be an alternative route for disposal.

References


