



Question: What is the correct way of disposing of a fentanyl transdermal patch?

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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.^{1,2,3} Patients receiving transdermal fentanyl should be carefully instructed in the proper use and disposal of the transdermal system.⁴ Patients should be advised to keep both used and unused fentanyl transdermal systems out of the reach of children and pets.⁵

The Summary of Product Characteristics for both Durogesic® and Matrifen® transdermal patches advises that used transdermal patches should be folded with the adhesive surfaces inwards so the release membrane is not exposed and safely discarded.^{1,6} Due to safety and environmental reasons, discarded according to local requirements or returned to the pharmacy.¹

A 2013 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Drug Safety Communication recommends that used patches should be folded in half, with the sticky sides together, and then flushed them down a toilet.⁷ While the FDA recognises that there are environmental concerns regarding flushing medicines down the toilet, they believe that folded patches thrown in the rubbish may be easily found by children or pets and that the risk associated with accidental exposure to fentanyl outweighs any potential risk associated with disposal by flushing.⁷ When the patch is no longer in use, disposing by flushing completely eliminates the risk of harm to people in the home.⁷

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In the hospital setting, fentanyl transdermal patches should be disposed in accordance with local requirement.^{1,6} The manufacturers of Durogesic® and Matrifen® (Janssen-Cilag and Takeda, respectively) do not offer specific advice on denaturing the product, they advise that controlled drugs procedures should be followed.^{8,9} It seems reasonable to assume that disposal in an appropriate pharmaceutical waste bin is an appropriate alternative route for disposal.

References

- 1) Summary of Product Characteristics Matrifen Transdermal patch. Available from www.hpra.ie. Accessed on the 07/02/17.
- 2) Monograph Fentanyl. Martindale: The complete drug reference. Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed on the 07/02/17.
- 3) Monograph Quick Clinical Guide: Use of Transdermal Fentanyl Patches. Available from www.palliatedrugs.com. Accessed on the 07/02/17.
- 4) Monograph Fentanyl. British National Formulary. Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed on the 07/02/17.
- 5) Monograph Fentanyl. American Hospital Formulary Services. Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed on the 07/02/17.
- 6) Summary of Product Characteristics Durogesic DTrans Transdermal Patch. Available from www.hpra.ie. Accessed on 07/02/17.
- 7) FDA Drug Safety Communication: Fentanyl patch can be deadly to children. Food and Drug Administration. Available from www.fda.gov. Accessed on the 07/02/17.
- 8) Communication with Janssen-Cilag Medicines Information Department. February 2017.
- 9) Communication with Takeda Medicines Information Department. March 2017.