

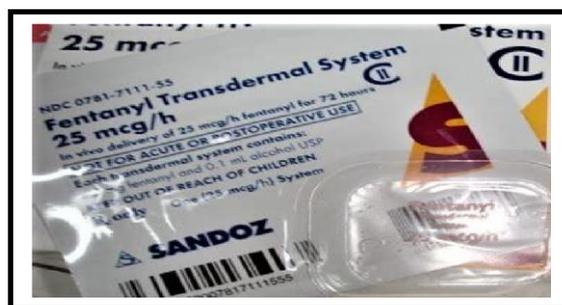
## Fatal accidental exposure to transdermal fentanyl patches.

Prescribing tip for information only

**MHRA safety warning - Transdermal fentanyl patches: life-threatening and fatal opioid toxicity from accidental exposure, particularly in children (October 2018).<sup>(1)</sup>**

Fentanyl transdermal patches are a potent opioid analgesic. Accidental exposure to the patches can occur if a patch is swallowed, transferred or touched by another individual. Risk is heightened in children as they have a lower threshold than adults.

Between July 2014 and October 2018 the MHRA received 5 reports of fatal incidents specifying accidental exposure, accidental overdose or product adhesion issues, and continue to receive reports of preventable accidental transfer of fentanyl patches.



**Safe disposal of fentanyl transdermal patches: Patches should be firmly folded so the adhesive side of the patch sticks to itself, avoiding touching the adhesive side in doing so and washing hands afterwards. The folded patch should then be placed back into the original sachet and stored safely out of sight and reach of children until it can be safely disposed of. Patients are advised to talk to their pharmacist about safe disposal of patches, both used and unused.**

**Potential symptoms or signs of fentanyl overdose to be aware of are:** difficulty breathing or shallow breathing, tiredness, extreme sleepiness or sedation, feeling faint, dizzy or confused, inability to think, walk or talk normally.

**Urgent medical attention should be sought if a patient is displaying signs of opioid overdose or if accidental exposure is suspected.**

**All patients and caregivers should be informed by healthcare professionals involved in the prescribing and dispensing of fentanyl patches, how to safely use, store and dispose of fentanyl transdermal patches. Advice should include not cutting patches and ensuring that old patches are removed before applying a new one. Clear information on the risk of accidental transfer and emphasis to closely follow pack instructions should be advised.**

Reference 1 <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/transdermal-fentanyl-patches-life-threatening-and-fatal-opioid-toxicity-from-accidental-exposure-particularly-in-children>