

Patch-for-Patch Fentanyl Return Program

This document is prepared by www.pharmasist.ca

1. Purpose	
The patch-for-patch program is designed to reduce abuse, misuse, diversion, loss, and unsafe disposal of prescription fentanyl patches. Patients receiving fentanyl patches must return used patches to a pharmacy before receiving new patches, unless an exception applies.	
Prescriber Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Record the pharmacy name and address on every fentanyl patch prescription.Notify the pharmacy in advance by fax or telephone.Mark "first prescription" when applicable.Confirm patient has not previously received fentanyl patches from another prescriber when issuing a first prescription.	Before Dispensing <ul style="list-style-type: none">Confirm pharmacy name and location are written on the prescription.Confirm the prescriber notified the pharmacy before dispensing.Confirm whether this is a first prescription.Verify authenticity when required.
2. Patch-for-Patch Dispensing Rule	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Unless it is a first prescription, fentanyl patches should be dispensed in exchange for used patches returned by the patient or authorized representative.The pharmacist must examine and document returned patches.Returned patches must be stored securely before destruction.Destruction must follow narcotic, controlled drug, and targeted substance destruction procedures.	
If Fewer Patches Are Returned <ul style="list-style-type: none">Assess patient circumstances and medical condition.Use professional judgment to decide how many patches, if any, to dispense.Notify prescriber of number of used patches returned.Notify prescriber of number of new patches dispensed.Document the decision and rationale.	Exceptions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Out-of-Ontario prescriber, if prescription is verified.Another pharmacy listed, if authenticity is verified and no patches were dispensed there.LTC home, correctional facility, or hospital when a written medication management policy exists and the pharmacy has a copy.
3. Patient Counselling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explain that used and unused patches must be tracked carefully.Explain that failure to return used patches may delay or reduce new patch supply.Advise patient to store used patches securely because residual fentanyl can cause harm.Advise patient to return patches as directed by the pharmacy.	
Loss, Theft, or Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none">If patches are stolen before use, request a police report.If patches are lost, assess circumstances and patient history.Look for repeated loss or theft patterns.For travel supply, request evidence of travel dates when appropriate.	When to Notify Police <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider police notification if counterfeit, misuse, or tampering is suspected.Consider notification if repeated zero-patch or short-patch returns suggest diversion.Balance notification with patient privacy obligations.
4. Documentation Requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Document returned patch count.Document examined returned patches.Document number of new patches dispensed.Document communication with prescriber.Document professional judgment and clinical rationale when fewer patches are returned.Document patient counselling, loss/theft reports, and travel-related decisions.	
5. Pharmacy Workflow Checklist	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Verify prescription requirements before dispensing.Confirm prescriber notification was received.Collect returned patches unless first prescription or exception applies.Count, examine, document, and secure returned patches.Assess incomplete returns using professional judgment.Notify prescriber when fewer patches are returned or fewer new patches are dispensed.Store returned patches securely until destruction.Complete destruction documentation.	