

Using Fentanyl in Dying Patients

Sometimes there is confusion about how best to manage a patient who has been using Fentanyl patches for pain control but who is dying and can no longer take oral medication for breakthrough pain.

These guidelines are intended to clarify and simplify good practice.

- 1 Continue to change the Fentanyl patch every three days.
- 2 If additional analgesia is necessary, S/C diamorphine should be given. This can be given in a syringe driver with additional 4 hourly s/c injections available for immediate relief of breakthrough pain.

Appropriate doses are:-

Fentanyl patch strength mcg/hr	Diamorphine mg/24 hrs s/c	Diamorphine mg/4 hrs s/c for breakthrough pain
25	15	5 - 10
50	30	5 - 10
75	40	10 - 20
100	60	20 - 30
200	100	25 - 50

The Diamorphine is given in addition to the Fentanyl patch.

- 3 The Fentanyl patch should only be discontinued in exceptional circumstances by practitioners with a good working knowledge of the pharmacodynamics of Fentanyl. Many practitioners may prefer to seek expert advice first from:-

Hospital Pharmacy

Palliative medicine consultant/staff grade doctors

Any member of the hospital or Community Macmillan team

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