

Transdermal Patches

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

- Delivers medication through intact skin into systemic circulation at a controlled rate.

When to use

- Ordered sustained therapy such as analgesia, nicotine replacement, hormones, antianginals, antiemetics, or other patch formulations.

Supplies needed

- MAR/order; prescribed patch; gloves; clean gloves/scissors only for package; disposal container; date/time label if policy allows.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Verify medication rights, allergies, dose, schedule, old-patch location, and number of patches ordered.
- Assess skin, pain/symptoms, vitals, sedation, and medication-specific parameters.

● VAULT TIP

- Make “old patch off” a spoken safety check before “new patch on.”

● STEP-BY-STEP

1. Hand hygiene; identify patient with two identifiers; explain medication and heat precautions.
2. Compare patch with MAR/order at required checkpoints. Confirm strength, release duration, and total number of patches.
3. Apply gloves. Search the patient carefully for every old patch, including hidden skin folds and under clothing.
4. Remove old patch first unless the order specifically requires overlap. Fold adhesive sides together and dispose per drug, manufacturer, and facility policy.
5. Remove gloves, perform hand hygiene, and apply clean gloves.
6. Clean selected skin with water if needed and dry completely. Clip excess hair; do not shave or apply lotion, oil, powder, or alcohol unless directed.
7. Open package without cutting the patch. Never cut a patch unless the manufacturer explicitly states it may be cut.
8. Remove liner without touching the medicated adhesive surface.
9. Apply patch flat to approved site and press firmly with palm for the manufacturer-specified time; seal edges.
10. Date, time, and initial the patch or adjacent dressing only if policy/manufacturer permits. Do not write through or damage the patch.
11. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene. Reassess adhesion and patient response.
12. Document exact site and create a rotation plan. Teach patient to avoid heating pads, hot tubs, fever-related heat, and MRI exposure unless patch is confirmed safe.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Used patches may retain dangerous medication; keep away from children and pets.
- Heat can increase absorption and cause toxicity.
- Never apply multiple patches unless specifically ordered.
- Check patch-specific MRI and disposal instructions.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Applying a new patch before finding the old one.
- Cutting a reservoir or unapproved patch.
- Placing over irritated skin or lotion.
- Failing to document exact site.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Medication, strength, number, date/time.
- Old patch removal and disposal.
- New site and skin condition.
- Required vitals/symptom response.
- Teaching, adverse effects, notifications.