

# CRITICAL Incident Learning

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

### DISPOSAL OF FENTANYL PATCHES

#### **How should fentanyl patches be safely discarded?**

Accreditation Canada states that hospitals must have a process for proper disposal but does not require a particular process. ISMP Canada is aware that many hospitals dispose of patches in sharps containers.

A key factor in disposal of fentanyl patches is that the patch cannot be inadvertently or deliberately accessed; incidents have been reported of small children accessing via regular garbage, as well as access for diversion purposes. One option may be for organizations to treat the disposal of fentanyl patches in the same way other narcotic wastage is treated, for instance having a witness signature. If a patch is not found on a patient before applying a new patch, it would seem reasonable for the nurse to complete an incident/patient safety report.

A new community pharmacy program has been implemented in some jurisdictions where used fentanyl patches must be returned in order to receive a new supply of patches. See: <https://www.healthunit.com/fentanyl-patch-return-program>.