**Determine the appropriate starting dose of transdermal fentanyl.**
- Convert to equianalgesic dose of oral morphine using 60mg/day of oral morphine is equivalent to 25 mcg/hr of transdermal patch (~2 mg/day : 1 mcg/hr ratio)
- Round starting dose of patch up or down to the available patch strength based on clinical status of the patient.

**Individualize therapy by titrating to an effective dose.**
- Review pain scores and use of immediate release breakthrough medication.
- Titrate at 24 to 30 hours, but always by 72 hours, increase dose of patch if necessary.

**Prevent withdrawal and treat breakthrough pain**
- During titration, prescribe IR opioid previously used. To prevent withdrawal during the first 12-16 hours of initial therapy, give with 10% to 15% of the previous 24-hour opioid dose used administered every 3 to 4 hours “on schedule.”
- Patients should be instructed to take additional doses of this IR opioid (at the same dosage as antiwithdrawal) every 2-4 hours “if needed” for breakthrough pain during titration and thereafter.
- Breakthrough pain regimens need to be convenient for the patient and of limited frequency whenever possible. After steady state is reached, if breakthrough pain persists beyond a few doses each day then an increase in fentanyl dose should be considered. A new the breakthrough dose should be calculated correspondingly.
- Care should be taken in adjusting breakthrough and transdermal fentanyl dosing in opiate naïve patients and in those on low does of transdermal fentanyl (25mcg/hr). These patients may be adequately maintained on 3 or 4 breakthrough doses each day.

**Monitor need for new patches**
- Apply a new patch every 72 hours.
- Increase the dose of the patch, when necessary, to address increased needs for breakthrough pain relief.
- Consider applying new patch after 48 hours if more than four doses of rescue medication are consistently required or for those patients where the analgesic effect of transdermal fentanyl begins to decline after 48 hours and lasts only for around 60 hours.

IR = immediate release