

Qutenza

Information and advice for patients

Pain management

Your doctor at the Pain Management clinic has suggested that Qutenza may ease your pain. This leaflet will briefly explain the treatment. It is important that you understand the treatment you will be receiving.

What is Qutenza?

Qutenza is a patch for use on your skin. It contains a strong concentration of capsaicin, which is the compound that gives chilli peppers their heat sensation. The capsaicin acts on pain sensing nerves in the skin, making them less sensitive to pain.

How does it work and what are the benefits to the treatment?

Qutenza is designed to provide pain relief in people who have nerve pain due to damaged nerves in the skin. Qutenza can be used either alone or in combination with other medicines that you may take to treat your pain.

The pain can be due to several different causes:

- Shingles
- Pain after surgery
- A reaction to some medicines
- Nerve damage from an accident or injury

What are the risks or side-effects from this treatment?

Like all medication Qutenza has some risks and side effects.

Common side-effects: may affect more than 1 in 10 people.

- Redness or pain on the area where the patch is applied that can last for more than one day.
- Itching, bumps, blisters, swelling, dryness on the areas the patch is applied.
- Burning sensation, high blood pressure, cough, nausea, pain in limbs, muscle spasms.

Uncommon side-effects: may affect up to 1 in 100 people.

- Wheals, prickling sensation, inflammation, increased or decreased skin sensation, skin reaction, irritation, bruising to the area the patch is applied.

- Decreased taste, reduced sensations in limbs, eye irritation, throat irritation.
- Deep redness on the area where the patch is applied, blistering/oozing of the skin, which becomes very painful to touch, swollen, wet or shiny. In a small number of cases, these may be signs of second degree burns and need urgent attention.

Rare side-affect: may affect up to 1 in 100 people.

- If you feel your heart is beating too fast, too slow or is beating abnormally, contact your doctor straightaway.

Are there any restrictions on using Qutenza?

- Any allergies to chilli peppers or any ingredients in the Qutenza patch.
- Do not use on any part of the head or face.
- Do not use on broken skin or open wounds.
- Qutenza is not recommended in patients under 18 years of age.

Pregnancy and breast feeding

Qutenza should be used with caution if you are pregnant. You should discontinue breastfeeding before treatment with Qutenza is started. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, think you may be pregnant, or are planning to have a baby ask your doctor for advice before using this medicine.

Driving and using machines

There are no studies of the effect of Qutenza on the ability to drive and use machines. When using Qutenza, only very small amounts of the active substance may be present in the blood stream for a very short time. Therefore, Qutenza is unlikely to have any direct effects on your ability to concentrate or your ability to drive or use machinery.

What are the alternatives?

Capsaicin cream can be used. This has a similar effect but is not as strong as Qutenza patches. Alternatively, you can remain on your existing pain medication or attend a Self-Management Programme.

How should I prepare for the treatment?

You may eat and drink and should take all your regular medication as usual. You should wear loose-fitting clothing over the treatment site(s) or, if your feet are being treated, wear comfortable footwear.

The doctor will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. Please make sure you have understood the explanation and ask any relevant questions.

During the procedure

The Qutenza patch should only be applied by the Doctor or Specialist Nurse in the pain clinic.

The painful area will be marked by your doctor or nurse with a pen or marker. The area will then be washed with soap and water and dried.

Before applying the Qutenza patch/patches to the skin, your doctor or nurse may apply a numbing gel or cream for 30 minutes to reduce potential stinging. The gel or cream will be removed, and the area cleaned and dried prior to applying the Qutenza patch.

Your doctor or nurse may cut the Qutenza patch to fit the treatment area. They will then place the Qutenza patch on your skin. They will put a bandage on top, if necessary, to keep it firmly on your skin.

The patch will need to stay in place for 30 minutes if you are being treated for nerve pain on your feet, or 60 minutes if you are being treated for nerve pain on other parts of your body. During this time, the nurse will monitor your blood pressure.

After this time, the nurse will carefully remove the Qutenza patch. They will apply a cleansing gel to the skin, which is left on for at least one minute, before wiping it off. The nurse will then wash the treated area gently with soap and water.

What special precautions should I take?

Do not sniff or inhale close to Qutenza patches as this may cause coughing or sneezing.

Do not touch a Qutenza patch with your hands during treatment as it may cause burning or stinging.

Do not touch your eyes, mouth or other sensitive areas during treatment.

Do not attempt to remove the patch yourself. A nurse will remove it for you.

Do not touch the Qutenza patch, or other materials that have come into contact with the treated areas, as they may cause burning and stinging.

What should I expect immediately after treatment?

After the patch has been removed, it is likely that you will have the following where the Qutenza patch has been applied:

- reddening of the skin
- pain
- a burning sensation This is normal and will reduce over the following days.

During this time, avoid hot baths or showers, direct sunlight on the treatment sites and vigorous exercise. At home you can ease this discomfort by:

- Cooling the treatment sites with cool packs from the fridge (not the freezer). Do not use ice.
- Taking pain relief such as paracetamol, if you can take it (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose).

How soon will I feel pain relief after treatment?

Most people will start to feel some pain relief on the day the patch is applied. However, it may take up to 14 - 21 days before you feel the full effect at the treatment site.

Follow up

After the procedure we will discharge you back to the care of your GP. They will review your progress and request re-referral back to the pain clinic if they deem this necessary.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Pain Management Service on:

Tel: 0121 507 4866

Monday to Friday 9am - 4pm

If you have any problems outside of these times, or experiencing severe side effects, please contact your GP.

Further information

More information with regards your condition, treatment options and support groups, can be found at:

- www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk
- www.britishpainsociety.org
- www.painconcern.org.uk

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk, follow us on X @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

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