

Pain clinic

Qutenza

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to answer some of the questions that you might have about your treatment and care. Please speak to your nurse or doctor if you have any further questions about your treatment.

What is Qutenza?

Qutenza is a new patch that contains eight per cent capsaicin. Capsaicin is extracted from hot chilli peppers. It can cause a temporary burning sensation but it can also make nerves less sensitive to pain and this effect can last for months in many people.

Why am I being offered Qutenza?

Scientific studies have shown that eight per cent capsaicin can significantly reduce pain caused by damaged nerves under the skin. Conditions where this may occur include post herpetic neuralgia (or painful shingles), chronic pain after operations or chemotherapy and other types of peripheral neuropathic pain.

How safe are Qutenza patches?

Qutenza patches have been through rigorous tests and are used internationally. They have been approved by the regulatory bodies in Britain, Europe and North America. While the patches almost always cause localised skin irritation (burning or stinging), there are few serious side effects and the levels of capsaicin (hot chilli pepper) within the body is very low.

Are there any risks involved in taking Qutenza?

Patients should take care to avoid contact with the eyes and other sensitive areas. Patches should not be applied to broken skin as this could be very painful. Also, you should avoid taking deep breaths immediately next to the patches as this can irritate the chest and cause temporary coughing, especially if suffering from significant lung disease.

Rarely, applying Qutenza patches can cause temporary increases or decreases to pulse rate and blood pressure. Therefore, people with uncontrolled high blood pressure or significant heart disease may not be able to use them.

It is also possible for patients to experience temporary effects such as nausea, dizziness, palpitations, itching, muscle spasm and swelling. It is also possible that Qutenza could cause pain for relatively long periods of time.

How does the treatment work?

You will be offered an appointment on a specific day at the specialist Qutenza clinic, located within the pain clinic. Before the procedure we will need to ask you a number of questions about your pain so that we can evaluate it after eight weeks and see if there's an improvement. We will also perform routine checks such as taking your pulse and your blood pressure.

After assessing the area of your pain and marking it with a pen, a Qutenza patch will be cut to the required size and carefully applied to the affected area for up to 60 minutes. We ask that you don't apply any lotion, cream or moisturiser to the treatment areas before your appointment. A dressing will be applied to cover the area and you will wait in the clinic until it is time to remove the patch.

The patch itself will irritate the area of skin that it is applied to and cause redness, itching, dryness, inflammation and pain. It has a similar feeling to sunburned skin. You must not touch the patch at any time as it is a skin irritant and, if it comes into contact with your eyes or other sensitive areas, it will cause temporary, severe burning pain.

What happens afterwards?

The side effects will be strongest in the clinic and some people need painkillers during this time. You should take your usual medications before and after attending the clinic.

It is not expected that Qutenza would be problematic with breastfeeding but, as no studies have been carried out in this area, we suggest mothers avoid breastfeeding for two to three days afterwards.

The irritation and discomfort may last two to three days and you may need to temporarily increase the doses of your medications. We advise that people do not drive or operate machinery for 24 hours after the procedure due to the discomfort and also the fact that they may have temporarily increased their medications. You should also avoid hot showers, bright sunlight and rigorous exercise. Some people find cool packs effective but ice must not be applied directly to the skin.

Most people usually notice a significant improvement during the first week after treatment. Approximately one third experience long lasting benefit and another third experience temporary benefit. Unfortunately, one third experience no significant benefit.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

You will have a follow-up around eight weeks after the procedure to check how you are doing. This will involve a scheduled telephone call to assess the response to the treatment (including pain scores). With this information, we will decide whether further treatments are needed.

If you have any unexpected problems before your follow-up appointment please call the pain clinic on 020 3311 7134.

If you feel significantly unwell it is best to see your GP urgently. If it's an emergency call 999 or go straight to A&E.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

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