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# Qutenza™ Patch treatment for the management of pain

The aim of this leaflet is to give you information about Qutenza™ (Capsaicin 8%) patch treatment and answer some questions you may have. Please note that some places do things differently to others. Your doctor or nurse will be able to explain fully what to expect.

## What is Qutenza™ treatment?

Qutenza™ is a skin patch designed to provide pain relief in people who have certain types of nerve (neuropathic) pain. Nerve pain is often described as burning, stabbing, aching or like an electric shock. This type of pain usually has no clear cause. The pain may be due to shingles, diabetes or damage to nerves following an injury or surgery.

The patch contains Capsaicin (the substance that causes chilli peppers to be hot). The Capsaicin contained in Qutenza™ acts on pain-sensing nerves in the skin, making them less sensitive to pain. It can take up to 2 weeks to experience the full benefit of the treatment. The response to the treatment is variable and not all patients experience pain relief. If effective, the treatment can be repeated as needed by the return of pain, but not earlier than three months.

## Is this the right treatment for me?

Other treatment options will be discussed with you before deciding to have the Qutenza™ treatment and your consent is needed. The decision on whether or not to have this treatment is made together by your doctor and you. Your doctor will be able to give you with up-to-date information about the chance of this treatment working for you and how it fits in with other care. If you are undecided about whether or not to have this treatment, then more advice and information can be given. Please speak to your doctor for more information.

If your health has changed, it is important to let your doctor know.

- ▶ If you have an infection in your body or on the skin, your doctor will wait until the infection is cleared before you have the treatment.
- ▶ If you have been started on anticoagulant or antiplatelet medicines that "thin the blood" such as warfarin, heparin, apixaban, rivaroxaban or clopidogrel, extra preparation may be needed before you have the treatment.
- ▶ If you suffer from unstable or poorly controlled high blood pressure or have had recent heart problems or stroke.
- ▶ If you have uncontrolled or severe respiratory disease.
- ▶ If you have any allergies, especially to chilli peppers.

You must also tell the doctor if there is any chance that you could be pregnant.

## **What will happen to me during the treatment?**

Before the treatment, your doctor will discuss the procedure with you. Your doctor will either ask for your consent or ask you to confirm that you have already given consent and are still happy to have the treatment. The treatment will take place in a dedicated area with a trained person.

Not all healthcare professionals do this treatment in exactly the same way, but this is what usually happens:

- ▶ A medical professional will get you ready for the procedure.
  - ▶ Your blood pressure and pulse rate will be checked.
  - ▶ The treatment area on your skin may be marked with a pen or marker.
  - ▶ Any hair in the treatment area will be clipped using scissors (please do not do this at home before your appointment).
  - ▶ If needed, the Qutenza™ patch may be cut to fit the area being treated. The patch will then be applied, and a bandage or dressing will be placed over the patch to keep it in place.
  - ▶ The Qutenza™ patch will be left on for 30-60 minutes depending on the body part being treated.
  - ▶ After this time, a healthcare professional will carefully remove the Qutenza™ patch and clean the treatment site with cleansing gel and lukewarm water.
- It is very common for the skin to sting or become red with a burning sensation during and after Qutenza™ treatment for a short while. Because of this temporary pain, your blood pressure may increase slightly and therefore your blood pressure will be monitored during treatment. If you experience a lot of pain, local cooling will be applied, or you can take your own pain medicine.

## **When will I be able to go home from hospital after my treatment?**

You will usually be able to go home within a few hours after the treatment and in some cases much sooner, depending on how long your doctor or nurse want you to stay. Please make sure that you have someone to collect you after the procedure. It is advisable not to drive immediately after the procedure. If you do so your motor insurance may be invalid.

## **What can I do after my treatment?**

Ideally, you should arrange for someone to stay with you for 24 hours but, if you cannot, you should at least have access to a telephone. You should not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents, provide childcare without help or drink alcohol until fit to do so. If you are not sure, please ask your doctor for more advice.

## **When can I return to work after the procedure?**

This will be different for different people and may depend on the type of work you do. It is difficult to give general advice and so you should discuss this with your doctor.

## **Will I experience any side-effects?**

As with any procedure, there may be some side effects. These are usually minor but there are risks with this procedure.

- ▶ It is very common for skin to become red and painful (stinging or burning sensation) in the area where the Qutenza™ patch is applied.
- ▶ Other common side effects are itching, bumps, blisters, swelling and dryness in the area where the patch is applied.

- ▶ Rarely, your blood pressure may increase slightly, and your blood pressure will be monitored.
- ▶ Rarely, changes in skin sensation happen. This means that you may not be able to feel something which is hot or sharp. This is usually temporary.



People vary in how they interpret words and numbers.  
This scale is provided to help.



### What precautions do I need to take?

- ▶ Avoid touching the patch, treated skin or clothes exposed to the patch and then touching your eyes, mouth or other sensitive areas as Capsaicin can cause severe irritation.
- ▶ Do not try to remove the patch yourself.
- ▶ Do not breathe in or sniff close to Qutenza™ patches.
- ▶ Avoid having a hot bath/shower or allowing direct sunlight to the area for 24-48 hours. This may irritate the skin where the patch has been applied and cause a burning sensation or increase in pain. Using lukewarm or cool water may be more tolerable.
- ▶ You should avoid vigorous exercise for a few days after treatment.

### What can I expect in the days afterwards?

You can expect the treated area to be red and to feel a burning sensation at the site. This will get better over the next few days. Cool packs wrapped in a towel, or your regular pain relief will help with any discomfort. Try to keep on the move about the house while avoiding anything too difficult.

### What should I do in the weeks after the treatment?

As your pain decreases, you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities like a daily walk, using an exercise bike or swimming on your back will help. It is best to increase your activities slowly. Try not to do too much so that you have more pain the next day. Your doctor will be able to give you more specific advice.

### What follow-up will be arranged?

A letter will usually be sent to your GP and your doctor will advise on what to do after the procedure. You may be asked to make a call to the pain department, be given a form to fill in, or given a telephone review or other appointment.

### **Is there anything else I need to think about before the procedure?**

- ▶ You should wear loose-fitting clothing over the treatment site. If your feet are being treated, wear comfortable footwear.
- ▶ Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- ▶ Bring any other devices you may need, such as hearing aids, mobility aids etc.
- ▶ Always bring a list of all current medication.
- ▶ Continue to take your medication as usual on the treatment day.
- ▶ Avoid vaccinations including COVID-19 jabs for 2 weeks on either side of the procedure.

### **Finally...**

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's or health care team's advice. If you need more information or have any questions or concerns, please speak to your GP or contact your Pain Clinic.

After your procedure, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your GP/Minor Injuries Unit/Accident & Emergency  
or  
Contact the Chronic Pain Service at **01495-768699** or **01495-765701** (09:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday)

Adapted from Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) Patient Information Leaflet for General Injection treatment

**This document is available in Welsh/  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**

