

Department of anaesthesia and pain medicine

Qutenza® (Capsaicin) 8% patch

Pain is transmitted by nerves so it is often possible to reduce pain by blocking signals from affected nerves.

What is Qutenza® (capsaicin) 8% patch and who is it for?

Qutenza® is a patch for use on your skin. It contains a synthetic form 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. The effects of Qutenza® can be easily reversed.

What are the benefits of using Qutenza®?

Qutenza® is designed to provide prolonged pain relief for people who have nerve pain due to damaged nerves in the skin. Most people will start to feel some pain relief on the first day the patch is applied. However, it may take up to 14 days before you feel the maximum benefit. Some patients will have total pain relief, others experience prolonged pain relief for 3 months or more and others get relief for shorter periods of time. Some may not get any benefit from the procedure.

Why is Qutenza® used?

Peripheral nerve pain (PNP) is a particular type of pain caused by damage to the peripheral nervous system, the network of nerves that transmits information between the brain and every other part of the body. When these nerves become damaged, they sometimes send inappropriate messages to the brain. The resulting pain is often described as burning, stabbing, shooting, aching or like an 'electric shock'. PNP can be caused by certain diseases such as shingles, medical procedures or injury.

How is the procedure done?

We will ask you to come to the surgical day case unit (SDCU) where a nurse will mark the most painful areas on your skin with a pen or marker. These areas will be washed with soap and water and dried. Any hair in the treatment area will be clipped using scissors. You should wait for a nurse to do this, **DO NOT** remove any hair before your appointment. The healthcare professional will apply a numbing gel or cream to your skin to reduce any stinging caused by the Qutenza®. The numbing gel/cream may be left on for up to an hour before being wiped off.

The nurse may cut the Qutenza® patch into smaller pieces to fit the treatment area. They will then place the Qutenza® patch on your skin. A bandage may be put on top of the patch to keep it firmly on your skin. The Qutenza® patch will be left on for 30 minutes if you are being treated for nerve pain on your feet or for 60 minutes if you're being treated for nerve pain on other parts of your body. After this time, the nurse will carefully remove the patch. They will then apply a cleansing gel to the skin which will be left on for one minute before being wiped off. The treated area will then be washed gently with soap and water. Your blood pressure will be checked before during and after application. You will be allowed to go home shortly after the procedure. You can eat and drink as normal.



If you experience pain or burning/stinging sensations during the treatment the healthcare professional will carry out cooling techniques and/or provide short acting painkillers.

What are the side effects?

It is usual for the skin to sting or become red and burn for a short while during and after the Qutenza® treatment. Your blood pressure may go up because of the temporary reaction to the Qutenza®. Other side effects include: itching, bumps, blisters, swelling, dryness, wheals, prickling sensation, inflammation of the skin, increased sensitivity of the skin, skin reaction, irritation and bruising. These side effects are normal and wear off over the first 7 days. However, if any of these side effects become serious, or if you experience other side effects please contact the pain clinic or your GP for advice.

Can I have further Qutenza® therapy?

For most people Qutenza® is effective and the benefit can be long-lasting. Some people have long-lasting relief for weeks or even months before the pain returns. It is not uncommon to see total pain relief. Qutenza® can be repeated at 90 day intervals, if your doctor feels this is appropriate and effective for you. Qutenza® does not work for everyone.

Advice and precautions

- You can go home shortly after Qutenza® therapy and you can drive.
- You can resume your normal daily activities.
- If the treated area is painful, stinging or burning apply cold compresses to the affected area. You can take your regular painkillers as needed.
- The treated area may be sensitive to heat, hot showers/baths, direct sunlight or vigorous exercise for the first few days following treatment.
- A follow-up appointment will be made for you by the pain clinic secretary and sent to you in the post.

It is very important to tell your doctor or the secretary of the pain clinic, at least a week before the Qutenza® treatment if:

- you are allergic to any medications
- you have an infection at the treatment site
- you think you might be pregnant
- you have had a recent heart attack or have unstable hypertension (high blood pressure).

Contact: Pain management team 0161 918 2153

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week