

# Qutenza

## Pain Management Team Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet is for people who are considering using Qutenza. It gives information on what Qutenza is, what the treatment involves and the benefits and risks of using it.

### What is Qutenza?

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.

It 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.

## What are the benefits of the treatment?

You have a type of pain known medically as peripheral neuropathic pain. This means pain in the nerves in your extremities such as your hands, feet and arms. This type of pain can have several different causes, including:

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

The Qutenza patches should help relieve your pain.

## What are the risks?

Like all medicines, Qutenza has some risks and side effects, although not everybody gets them. It is very common for the skin to become red and painful (a stinging or burning sensation) in the area where the Qutenza patch is applied.

Other common side effects are: itching, bumps, blisters, swelling and dryness on the area where the patch is applied.

## Are there any restrictions on using Qutenza?

Qutenza must not be used if:

- You are allergic to chilli peppers or any of the ingredients in the Qutenza patch. The nurse will check this with you before they apply the patch.
- You have poorly controlled high blood pressure or have recently had heart problems.

## 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.

## **How should I prepare for the treatment?**

If you take regular medication, take it as usual before coming to the clinic for the treatment. You should wear loose-fitting clothing over the treatment site(s) or, if your feet are being treated, wear comfortable footwear.

## **Who will give me the Qutenza treatment?**

The patch will be applied by a nurse who has been specially trained in Qutenza patch application.

## **What does the treatment application involve?**

Qutenza is for use on your skin. The nurse may mark the most painful areas on your skin with a pen or marker. These areas will then be washed with soap and water, and then dried.

It may be a good idea to take a painkiller like paracetamol before the treatment, if you can take it (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose). This will help to reduce any discomfort caused by Qutenza.

The healthcare professional 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.

## Is the procedure painful?

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. Your blood pressure may go up slightly and therefore this will be monitored during treatment. If you experience a lot of pain, the nurse will cool the area to ease this.

## 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 days before you feel the full effect at the treatment site.

### **Can I drive and use machinery after treatment?**

Yes. Qutenza will not have any direct effect on your ability to drive or use machinery. Only small amounts of the active substance pass into the bloodstream and this only stays there for a short period of time.

### **How often will I need Qutenza treatment?**

You can have treatment again, if your pain comes back, after about 90 days. However, recent studies have shown that the average time to needing treatment again is about 20 to 22 weeks.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Pain Management Team on 01384 244735 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays). This is an answering machine and we will return your call as soon as we can.

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/pain-management/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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