Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Capsaicin

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Alivio [OTC] [DSC]; Allevess [OTC] [DSC]; Arthritis Pain Relieving [OTC]; Asperflex Hot Pain Relieving [OTC]; Capsaicin HP [OTC]; Capsaicin Topical Pain Patch [OTC] [DSC]; Capsaid ES Arthritis Relief [OTC]; Capsiderm [OTC] [DSC]; Capzix [OTC]; Castiva Warming [OTC] [DSC]; Circata [OTC]; Dendracin Neurodendraxcin [OTC]; DermacinRx Capsaicin [OTC]; DermacinRx Circatrix [OTC]; DermacinRx Penetral [OTC]; Douleurin [OTC] [DSC]; Levatio [DSC]; Limencin [OTC]; MenCaps [OTC]; Menthozen Hydrogel [OTC]; New Terocin [OTC]; Qutenza; Qutenza (2 Patch); Qutenza (4 Patch); Reliever [OTC] [DSC]; Salonpas Pain Rel Gel-Ptch Hot [OTC]; Salonpas-Hot [OTC]; Sure Result SR Relief [OTC] [DSC]; Zestama [OTC]; Zostrix HP [OTC] [DSC]; Zostrix Natural Pain Relief [OTC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to ease muscle and joint aches and pain.
- It is used to treat nerve pain.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.

- If you are allergic to chili peppers.
- If you are using another drug like this one. If you are not sure, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by the doctor.
- Avoid use of heat sources (such as sunlamps, tanning beds, heating pads, electric blankets, heat lamps, saunas, hot tubs, heated waterbeds). Avoid long, hot baths or sunbathing. Your temperature may rise and cause too much drug to pass into your body.
- Take this drug off of the skin if very bad burning or itching happens.
- Do not breathe in this drug. May cause nose or throat irritation like coughing or sneezing. Get medical help right away if you breathe in this drug and feel short of breath.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.
- If you are breast-feeding, do not put this drug right on the nipple or the area right around it.

Qutenza:

- High blood pressure has happened with this drug. Have your blood pressure checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Your skin may be sensitive to heat for a few days after you use this drug. This includes from heat sources like hot showers or baths, sunlight, sunlamps, tanning beds, heating pads, electric blankets, heat lamps, saunas, hot tubs, heated waterbeds. It also includes heat from exercise.

Cream, gel, liquid, or lotion:

- Use care when using on a large part of the skin. Talk with the doctor.
- If the problem being treated gets worse, or if it goes away and then comes back, talk with the doctor.
- Some of these drugs may catch on fire. Do not use near an open flame or while smoking.
- This drug may cause harm if swallowed. If this drug is swallowed, call a doctor or poison control center right away.

Patch:

- If the problem being treated gets worse, or if it goes away and then comes back, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause harm if chewed or swallowed. This includes used patches. If this drug has been put in the mouth, call a doctor or poison control center right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

All products:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Qutenza:

- Signs of high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Loss of feeling or sense of touch that is new or worse.
- Severe or long-lasting pain where this drug is used.
- Blisters where this drug is used.
- Pain in arms or legs.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

All products:

- Burning or stinging feeling. Most of the time, this will go away after a few days.
- Irritation where this drug was used.

Qutenza:

- Upset stomach.
- Pain where this drug was put on. Pain can be treated with mild pain drugs or cooling at the site. Be sure you know how to use cool packs the right way. Using them wrong or for too long can cause frostbite. Use cool packs from the refrigerator, not the freezer. Do not put cool packs right on the skin.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Qutenza:

- Your doctor will apply and remove the patch.
- Do not touch the patch while it is on your skin.
- Do not touch the area where this drug was put on the skin.
- Do not get this drug in the eyes, nose, or mouth.

All other products:

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- You may wear gloves when putting on.
- Do not put on irritated skin.
- Do not put on cuts, scrapes, rashes, or damaged skin.

Cream, gel, liquid, lotion, or skin patch:

- If this drug gets in the eyes, rinse with cool water.

Cream, gel, liquid, or lotion:

- Wash your hands before and after use. If your hand is the treated area, do not wash your hand after use.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- If hands are treated, do not wash your hands for 30 minutes after you put on this drug. Do not touch your eyes, nose, mouth, genitals, irritated skin, or contact lenses until you wash your hands.
- Do not bathe, shower, or swim right after putting on.
- Do not put on right after a shower or bath.

Skin patch:

- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Put on clean, dry, healthy skin.
- Take patch off at least 1 hour before you bathe, shower, or swim.
- Do not put on right after a shower or bath.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If you use this drug on a regular basis, put on a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not put on 2 doses or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is used on an as needed basis. Do not use more often than told by the doctor.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

Qutenza:

- This drug will be given in a hospital or doctor's office. You will not store it at home.

All other products:

- Store at room temperature.

Cream, gel, liquid, or lotion:

- Protect from heat or open flame.

Skin patch:

- Protect from heat and sunlight.
- Protect from moisture.
- After you take off a skin patch, be sure to fold the sticky sides of the patch to each other. Throw away used patches where children and pets cannot get to them.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any

questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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