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 your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

Qutenza:

- If your child has been given this form of this drug, talk with the doctor for information about the benefits and risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about giving this drug to your child.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child is allergic to chili peppers.
- If your child is using another drug like this one. If you are not sure, ask your child's doctor or pharmacist.

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

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins)

and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by your child's doctor.
- Have your child 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 child's temperature may rise and cause too much drug to pass into your child's body.
- Take this drug off of the skin if very bad burning or itching happens.
- Be sure your child does not breathe in this drug. It may cause nose or throat irritation like coughing or sneezing. Get medical help right away if your child breathes in this

drug and feels short of breath.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.
- If your child is breast-feeding a baby, be sure she does not put this drug right on the nipple or the area right around it.

Cream, gel, liquid, or lotion:

- Use care when putting on a large part of the skin or where there are open wounds. 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 child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- 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.

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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Burning or stinging feeling. Most of the time, this will go away after a few days.

- Irritation where this drug was used.

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Do not give by mouth. Use on your child's skin only. Keep out of your child's mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- 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.
- If this drug gets in the eyes, rinse with cool water.

Cream, gel, liquid, or lotion:

- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- If your child's hands are treated, do not let your child wash their hands for 30 minutes after putting on this drug. Do not let your child touch the eyes, nose, mouth, genitals, irritated skin, or contact lenses until your child washes their hands.
- Do not let your child bathe, shower, or swim right after using.
- Do not put on right after a shower or bath.

Patch:

- Put on clean, dry, healthy skin.
- Take patch off at least 1 hour before your child bathes, showers, or swims.
- Do not put on right after a shower or bath.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- If your child uses 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 child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not put on 2 doses or extra doses.

- Many times this drug is given on an as needed basis. Do not give to your child more often than told by the doctor.

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

All products:

- Store at room temperature.
- 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.

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.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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.

Last Reviewed Date

2025-12-11

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

Capsaicin - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center