

Information for adult patients prescribed Lidocaine 5% plasters for pain

Why have I been prescribed this?

- Lidocaine plasters can help reduce nerve pain which is confined to a particular area of your body. Nerve pain is usually described as burning, shooting, stabbing, pins and needles, crawling, electric shock like pain
- The plasters can be helpful for people who have nerve pain following surgery (e.g. chest wall surgery, post-mastectomy), an infection (e.g. shingles) or nerve injury. They may also be helpful for nerve pain caused by diabetes (painful diabetic neuropathy) and scar pain

How does it work?

- Lidocaine is a local anaesthetic. When the plaster is applied to the skin, the lidocaine is slowly absorbed into the skin and works on the nerves in that specific area. Lidocaine temporarily blocks pain messages travelling along pain nerves

When should I apply it?

- The number of plasters you are prescribed depends on the size and number of painful areas. The plasters can be cut to fit the size of the painful area. Up to 3 plasters may be needed to cover large or multiple areas. No more than 3 plasters should be used at the same time
- The plaster(s) are applied to the painful area once a day for up to 12 hours, then removed and disposed of. The painful area should then have a 12 hour plaster free period – this reduces the risk of a skin reaction. A new plaster can then be applied after the 12 hour plaster free period
- For example:
 - Monday morning at 8am: Apply the plaster to the painful area
 - Monday night at 8pm: Remove and dispose of the plaster
 - Tuesday morning at 8am: Apply a new plaster and so on...
- You should apply the plaster when your pain is worst. Most people prefer to wear the patch during the day but if your pain is worst at night, you may find the plaster more effective if you wear it during the night

How should I apply it?

- Your skin in the painful area should be clean and dry. If necessary, clip your hair in and around the treatment area to ensure that the patch sticks to your skin. Do not shave the area
- The plaster can be cut so it is the correct size to cover the painful area. The backing should then be removed from the plaster and the plaster should be applied to the painful area for up to 12 hours. Then remove the plaster, fold it in half (with the sticky edges touching) and put it in the household waste bin. Leave the painful area plaster free for 12 hours
- If the plaster is difficult to remove you can soak it with warm water for a few minutes first
- A new plaster is applied every 24 hours
- Wash your hands after handling the plaster
- Do not apply the plaster to inflamed, broken or infected skin or on an open wound
- Avoid contact with water (i.e. avoid swimming and showering) whilst the patch is applied

What if the plaster falls off or becomes unstuck?

- Try sticking it back on, in the same area. If it still won't stick, apply a new plaster (remember to remove the new plaster at the same time as the old plaster would have been removed)

What if I forget to remove the plaster after 12 hours?

- Remove the plaster as soon as you remember. Wait 12 hours before applying another plaster

What if I forget to put the plaster back on after the 12 hour break?

- Apply a new patch as soon as you remember

How long will it take to work?

- You may notice some improvement in your pain on the first day of wearing the patch. It can take up to 2 to 4 weeks for a full effect
- Lidocaine plasters do not work for everyone - If no improvement is seen after 2-4 weeks, the plaster should be stopped

Can I take use it long term?

- If your pain responds to the lidocaine plaster, your prescriber may want to try a plaster free period after 7 days of plaster use. It is often possible to discontinue the plaster without the pain recurring as the effect on the nerve ending continues after the plaster is removed
- Your prescriber will review you after around 24 hours – if your pain returns or is worse they may re-start the plaster, if your pain remains stable they may stop the plaster

What are the possible side effects?

- Application site reactions can occur including a rash, redness, blistering, bruising, swelling, burning or itching where the plaster is applied. If this occurs remove the plaster and speak to your GP, pharmacist or pain team for advice
- Only a small amount of lidocaine is absorbed into the blood stream which reduces the risk of a toxic reaction, however if the patch is left on for too long or is applied to broken or inflamed skin, lidocaine can accumulate and cause signs of toxicity including blurred/ double vision, ringing in the ears, dizziness, drowsiness, confusion, euphoria, numbness and twitching. If this occurs, remove the patch and seek urgent medical attention

Can I drink alcohol?

- You can drink alcohol in moderation whilst using lidocaine plasters

Can I drive?

- Lidocaine plasters are unlikely to affect your ability to drive or use heavy machinery, however do not drive if you feel unsafe to do so

What should I tell my doctor/ pharmacist/ pain team?

- If you have any allergies
- If you currently take any other medicines or herbal medicines
- If you have severe heart disease, kidney problems or liver problems

What if I want to stop taking it?

- You can stop using the lidocaine plasters if you find the ineffective. It is important to inform your GP or pain team