



Information for
patients and
carers

Capsaicin cream

What you may need to know

What is capsaicin cream?

Capsaicin is a cream for external local application which can help to ease certain types of pain. It is commonly used for pain relief following an attack of shingles and it can also be used to treat other neuropathic (nerve-related) painful areas of the skin.

Capsaicin contains an ingredient that is obtained from the fruits of the chilli pepper family.

How does capsaicin cream work?

Nerve cells produce a chemical messenger known as Substance P, which is involved in carrying pain messages to the brain. Sometimes, especially after an attack of shingles, this chemical seems to be over produced by the body which increases pain levels.

Capsaicin cream works on this chemical Substance P and stops it from sending the pain messages to the brain.

How to use capsaicin cream

Capsaicin is simple to use but to get the best results it must be used correctly. Capsaicin cream is a topical treatment, which means you apply it to the skin, usually in the area where you feel your pain. A small amount of cream, about the size of a pea is rubbed lightly on the painful area.

Putting on lots of cream does not work better and is a waste. It is very important after applying the cream that you wash your hands as it can irritate the eyes and other sensitive areas if you accidentally rub them with the cream on your fingers.

How often do you apply capsaicin cream?

You should put the cream on three to four times a day. It does not produce instant results; it builds up gradually. You may feel some

benefit after a few days, but it may take 6 to 8 weeks before you receive the full effect.

Allow 8 weeks before thinking of stopping the treatment as regular use is vital.

Some patients notice a tingling or even a burning sensation in the area where the cream has been applied. Do not be discouraged if you notice this initial discomfort. This is a normal response and occurs often in the early stages of treatment. It will reduce and passes with time. It is actually a good sign that the cream is working.

Side effects

Because you apply capsaicin to your skin, rather than take the medicine orally, the chances of side effects or it reacting with any other medicines you may be taking are very small.

Two different strengths

Capsaicin comes in two strengths. You should always start with the weaker cream and build up to the stronger cream.

Zacin 0.025% is the weakest cream and should be used first. Then proceed to **Axsain 0.075%** if clinically required.

Do's and Do nots

- Do - Apply the cream 3 or 4 times a day
- Do - Apply only a small amount
- Do - Wash your hands after putting the cream on
- Do - Wash the cream off with lots of water if it gets into your eyes
- Do - Only use the medicine externally as directed
- Do - Keep capsaicin cream and all medicines away from children

- Do not - Get the cream in your eyes or other sensitive areas
- Do not - Apply to broken or irritated skin
- Do not - Take a hot bath just before or after putting on the cream as it can worsen the stinging effect

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the Pain Management Team on 01772 524185, Monday to Friday, 09:00-16:00.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

Capsaicin medication leaflet:

<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/files/pil.887.pdf>

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دوسری زبانوں اور بڑی اگر آپ کوہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لئے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ییچھپیا میں ییہ ابی دست ہو یسکت ہے براغ مہر یان پوے یچھہی. معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعه با حرف كبيره و بلغات اذا كنت تريد مساعده في فهم هذه لمعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب أخرى يمانن تو فير هذه المعلومات

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