

Lidocaine Plasters - Patient Information Leaflet

Lidocaine plasters have been recommended as a treatment for you by your pain specialist. As well as reading this leaflet, please also read the manufacturer's patient information leaflet that is inside each pack of lidocaine plasters. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will be happy to answer any further questions you have.

What are lidocaine plasters?

Lidocaine plasters are large patches for sticking to the skin over painful areas. They are made with a special gel that allows the active ingredient (lidocaine) to be absorbed into the skin. Lidocaine is a local anaesthetic which temporarily blocks messages travelling along nerves. Lidocaine plasters can be used alongside other pain-relieving medications that you may have been prescribed.

When are lidocaine plasters prescribed?

Lidocaine plasters are prescribed for a condition known as post herpetic neuralgia. They can also be prescribed to treat other painful conditions, but this is called off label or off licence use, and then only pain specialists can start them. If you would like more information about off label or off licence use of pain medicines, please refer to a booklet called 'Use of medicines outside of their UK licensing authorisation in pain management and palliative medicine'. Details of the website where you can locate this booklet is provided at the end of this leaflet.

What happens after I have been started on lidocaine plasters, and how long will I need to use them for?

In-patients

If you have been prescribed lidocaine plasters during your stay as an in-patient, this is usually just a short course of treatment. Once you have used up the lidocaine plasters supplied by the hospital, your GP will usually not prescribe any more. Your GP will see you 2-4 weeks after you leave the hospital, to check if the plasters are helping to relieve your pain or if they should be stopped. If they are helping, your GP may prescribe for up to 8 weeks.

Very occasionally, some patients need to use lidocaine plasters for longer than 8 weeks, but the decision to use them for longer can only be made by a pain specialist. If it seems that you need to use lidocaine plasters for more than 8 weeks, your GP will telephone the Pain Service for further guidance.

Out-patients

If you have been prescribed lidocaine plasters for pain which is lasting a long time, and the plasters are helping to reduce the pain, then your pain specialist may ask your GP to prescribe them. Your pain specialist will write to your GP, and to you, to explain what the treatment plan is.

Whether you have been started on lidocaine plasters as an in-patient or an out-patient, please always let your GP know if they are not helping your pain. Usually an effect is seen within 2 weeks, so your GP will stop them after 4 weeks if they are not working. Treatment usually lasts for 4-8 weeks, and it is unlikely to continue for longer than 8 weeks.

What happens if I use lidocaine plasters for longer than 8 weeks?

If you are prescribed lidocaine plasters for a longer than 8 weeks, you will need to attend follow up appointments with your GP, at least once every 3 months. It is really important that you attend these appointments, so that your GP can keep checking if the plasters are working. Your GP will discuss your progress with your pain specialist as needed.

What happens at my follow up appointments?

Your GP or pain specialist will check if the lidocaine plasters are helping to relieve your pain, and they will reduce or stop them if they are not helping. You may be asked to discuss:

- How you are using the lidocaine plasters
- Your pain scores
- How you are sleeping
- The level of distress caused by your pain
- How much you are able to do
- Your overall impression of how your pain has changed since starting lidocaine plasters

If you do not attend your follow up appointments, your prescriptions may be stopped.

How should I reduce my lidocaine plasters?

Your GP or pain specialist will discuss with you how to reduce and stop your lidocaine plasters as your pain starts to settle. Options include:

- **A trial without a lidocaine plaster.** If your pain symptoms are manageable after 24 hours then the plasters can be stopped.
- **Increasing the length of time without a lidocaine plaster.** At first, you will be prescribed a plaster-free period of 12 hours per day, but this can be increased to a longer plaster-free period, until eventually the plasters can be stopped completely.
- **Reducing the amount of lidocaine plaster being used.** If the area of pain has reduced in size cut the plaster into smaller pieces. Alternatively, just use one plaster if you have been using more than one.

What should I do if pain increases when I stop using lidocaine plasters (or reduce the amount I use)?

See if the pain settles. If it does not settle then discuss with your GP.

Please remember that medicines used to manage long term pain may only reduce pain by 30-50% so please discuss with your GP or pain specialist other ways of managing your pain, e.g. ice, heat, massage, exercise, stretching, pacing of activities, relaxing and distraction. Your GP may refer you for specialist guidance.

What is my individual reduction plan?

Usually, lidocaine plasters can be just be stopped (when the time is right). If a gradual reduction is needed, your GP or pain specialist will complete the table below, with your help too.

Date	Area of body that lidocaine plaster should be applied to	Size of lidocaine plaster (e.g. one plaster, ½, ¼)	Length of plaster-free period each day	Response to reduction plan (pain, sleep, activities, mood) Patient – Please complete this section

Further information about off label or off licence use of pain medicines

Please visit the website below to access a booklet produced by the British Pain Society called ‘Use of medicines outside of their UK licensing authorisation in pain management and palliative medicine’

https://www.britishpainsociety.org/static/uploads/resources/files/book_useofmeds_patient.pdf