

Information about changes to medicines or treatments on the Health Service: **Changes to lidocaine plaster prescribing**

The Health Service is asking doctors to stop or greatly reduce the prescribing of some treatments on prescription. This is because the treatments are:

- Not as safe as other treatments OR
- Not as good (effective) as other treatments OR
- More expensive than other treatments that do the same thing.

One of these medicines is lidocaine plasters.

This document will explain why the changes are happening and where you can get more information and support.

What are lidocaine plasters used for?

Lidocaine plasters are applied to the skin and are used for the relief of nerve pain, which can happen after a shingles infection in adults.

Lidocaine plasters are sometimes used for other types of pain relief.

Why does the Health Service want to reduce prescribing of lidocaine plasters?

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) does not make a recommendation about lidocaine plasters for treating nerve pain because there is **not enough evidence** to do so, especially compared to other treatments. They are also very expensive compared to other pain treatments and are not good value for money.

There is **no good evidence** that they work for other types of pain.

What options are available instead of lidocaine plasters?

If you are already receiving lidocaine plasters on prescription your doctor will review your treatment.

You can talk to your doctor about the options available so that you can come to a joint decision about what the best option will be to relieve your pain.

Painkillers usually only reduce pain by 30% to 50%, so you can talk to your doctor about other things you can do to help manage your pain such as massage, ice or heat therapy, or gentle exercise. You can also use a wound dressing (such as a vapour permeable dressing) to protect sensitive areas.

What do I do if my medicine has been changed and it's causing me problems?

If you have problems with your new painkillers you can speak to your doctor.

In exceptional (rare) circumstances, lidocaine patches may continue to be prescribed for nerve pain following shingles (not for other types of pain relief) if all other possible treatments have not worked or can't be used.

Where can I find more information and support?

- You can speak to your local pharmacist, GP or the person who prescribed the medication to you
- National and local charities can offer advice and support, for example:
 - Pain Concern: 0300 123 0789 <http://painconcern.org.uk/>
 - Pain UK: <https://painuk.org>
- The Pain Toolkit is a resource to help people self-manage their pain, in order to help cope with pain on a daily basis and have an improved quality of life <https://www.pain toolkit.org/>
- The NICE information for patients can be found at: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg173/ifp/chapter/About-this-information
- The Patient and Client Council can also offer support and advice: <http://www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net/> or call 0800 917 0222.