

Buprenorphine

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

Buprenorphine patches are used for the treatment of chronic (long-term) pain.

How should I take/use this medication?

- Apply your medication as prescribed by your healthcare professional.
- The patch should be worn all the time and changed every seven days unless advised otherwise by your healthcare professional.
 - Bathing, showering or swimming should not affect the patch. If a patch falls off, a new one should be applied.
- The patch should be applied to the upper outer arm, upper chest, upper back or the side of the chest. Apply to a relatively hairless or nearly hairless, non-irritated unbroken skin site which should have no scars.
 - If the application site must be cleaned, it should be done with clean water only. Soaps, alcohol, oils, lotions or abrasive devices must not be used. The skin must be dry before the patch is applied.
 - Following removal of the protective layer, the transdermal patch should be pressed firmly in place with the palm of the hand for approximately 30 seconds, making sure the contact with skin is complete, especially around the edges. If the edges begin to peel off, the edges may be taped down with suitable surgical tape.
 - Avoid exposing the application site to external heat sources, such as heating pads, electric blankets, heat lamps, sauna, hot tubs, and heated water beds etc, as an increase in absorption of this medication may occur.
 - New patches should be applied to a different skin site. The same skin site should not be used for 3-4 weeks.
- If you find this medication does not sufficiently alleviate your pain at the prescribed dose, please consult your healthcare professional.

What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you forget to apply a patch, apply it as soon as you remember. Do not use two patches together to make up for the missed dose.

What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication. This includes a history of allergy to other related drugs including other opioids such as oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl and codeine.
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- You are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies.
- If you have a fever, the effect of this medication may be increased. Inform your healthcare professional if you have or develop a fever while using this medication.
- You suffer from diseases affecting your breathing including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or if you suffer from myasthenia gravis.

What are some common side-effects of this medication?

- Common side effects include gastrointestinal side effects such as constipation, dry mouth and nausea and vomiting, abdominal discomfort and weight loss.
- Itchiness and skin irritation.
- Altered mood, altered sleep and headaches.
- Sleepiness, confusion and dizziness. If affected, do not drive, operate machinery or perform tasks which require mental alertness.
- This medication has the potential to cause addiction. If you experience difficulty stopping this medication when it is no longer required, please consult your healthcare professional.

What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

This medication may depress your breathing. Seek immediate medical attention should you experience breathing difficulty including shallow or slow breathing.

What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?

Avoid alcohol. Alcohol may increase the risk of side effects with this medication.

Buprenorphine can generally be used with most other foods or medication. However, please inform your healthcare professional if you are taking other medications or herbal preparations.

How should I store this medication?

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

How should I throw away this medication safely?

Used patches must be folded over on themselves with the sticky layer facing inwards, and discarded safely into a black trash bag and sealed tightly before throwing in the rubbish chute or bin. For any unused/leftover/expired patches, these should be returned to the pharmacy for safe disposal.

Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.

Last updated on Jun 2022