capsaicin (kap-say-sin)
Capzasin-HP, Capzasin-P, DiabetAid Pain and Tingling Relief, Qutenza, Salonpas Hot, Zostrix Diabetic Foot Pain, Zostrix, Zostrix-HP

Classification
Therapeutic: topical analgesics (topical)

Pregnancy Category UK

Indications
Temporary management of pain due to rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Treatment of pain associated with postherpetic neuralgia (topical and transdermal) or diabetic neuropathy.

Unlabeled Use:
Treatment of postmastectomy pain syndrome.

Treatment of complex regional pain syndrome.

Action
Topical: May deplete and prevent the reaccumulation of a chemical (substance P) responsible for transmitting painful impulses from peripheral sites to the CNS.

Transdermal: Initially stimulates the transient receptor potential vanilloid 1 (TRPV1) receptors on nociceptive nerve fibers in the skin; this is followed by pain relief thought to be due to a reduction in TRPV1–expressing nociceptive nerve endings.

Therapeutic Effects:
Relief of discomfort associated with painful peripheral syndromes.

Pharmacokinetics
Absorption: Unknown.
Distribution: Unknown.
Metabolism and Excretion: Unknown.
Half-life: Unknown.

TIME/ACTION PROFILE
ROUTE ONSET PEAK DURATION
Topical 1–2 wk 2–4 wk† unknown
Transdermal unknown unknown unknown
†May take up to 6 wk for head and neck neuralgias

Contraindications/Precautions
Contraindicated in: Hypersensitivity to capsaicin or hot peppers; Not for use near eyes or on open or broken skin.

Use Cautiously in: OB, Lactation: Safety not established; Pedi: Safety not established in children ≤ 18 yr (transdermal) or ≤ 2 yr (topical).

Adverse Reactions/Side Effects
CV: Patch — q BP.
Resp: cough.
Derm: pain (after application of patch), transient burning.

Interactions
Drug-Drug: None significant.

Route/Dosage
Topical (Adults and Children ≥ 2 yr):
Apply to affected areas 3–4 times daily.

Transdermal (Adults):
Apply up to 4 patches for 60 min (single use); may be repeated q 3 mo, as needed based on pain (should not be used more frequently than q 3 mo).

NURSING IMPLICATIONS
Assessment
● Assess pain intensity and location before and periodically throughout therapy.

Potential Nursing Diagnoses
Chronic pain (Indications)
Noncompliance (Patient/Family Teaching)

Implementation
● Do not confuse Zostrix with Zovirax.

Topical:
Apply to affected area not more than 3–4 times daily; avoid getting medication into eyes or on broken or irritated skin. Do not bandage tightly.

Topical lidocaine may be applied during the first 1–2 wk of treatment to reduce initial discomfort.

Transdermal:
Identify treatment area (painful area including areas of hypersensitivity and allodynia) and mark on the skin. If needed, clip hair (do not shave) in and around treatment area to promote patch adhesion. Get patch to size and shape of treatment area. Promote patch adherence. Get patch to size and shape of treatment area. Remove the topical anesthetic with a dry wipe. Gently wash site with soap and water before application of patch. Remove the topical anesthetic with a dry wipe. Gently wash with soap and water before application of patch.

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Avoid getting medication into eyes or on broken or irritated skin. Do not bandage tightly.

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Topical:

- **Patient/Family Teaching**
  - Remove patches by gently and slowly rolling inward. After removal, generously apply Cleansing Gel to treatment area and leave on for at least 1 min. Remove Cleansing Gel with dry wash clothing and gently wash area with mild soap and warm but not hot, soapy water. Exception: if capsaicin gets into eyes, wash with cool water for 15 min. If pain persists longer than 1 mo, worsens, or if signs of infection are present, discontinue use and notify health care professional immediately.

- **Even following use of a local anesthetic prior to administration of capsaicin, patients may experience substantial procedural pain. Prepare to treat acute pain as needed following administration of capsaicin.**

- **Advise patient that exposure of skin to capsaicin may result in transient erythema and burning sensation.**

- **Advise patient to apply missed doses as soon as possible unless almost time for next dose.**

- **Advise patient that transient burning may occur with application, especially if applied less than 1–3 times daily. Burning usually disappears after the first few days but may continue for 2–4 wk or longer. Burning is increased by heat, sweating, bathing, or exposure to warm, humid, or cold environments.**

- **Advise patient to notify health care professional if pregnancy is planned or suspected or if breast feeding.**

- **Mild redness and/or irritation at patch site may occur. These effects usually resolve within 1 wk.**

- **Advise patient to notify health care professional if they have experienced any recent cardiovascular event.**

- **Advise patient to notify health care professional if pregnancy is planned or suspected or if breast feeding.**

- **Evaluate/Desired Outcomes**
  - Decrease in discomfort associated with neuralgias, and 4–6 wk with neuralgias of the head and neck.

- **Why was this drug prescribed for your patient?**

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