

Nitroglycerin Patch

FAQ



1 What does nitroglycerin do in the body?

The patches are used alone or in combination with other medications to prevent angina in people with coronary artery disease. Nitroglycerin reduces the number of angina attacks by relaxing blood vessels and increasing oxygen and blood supply to the heart.



3 Can nitroglycerin patches be used for immediate relief of acute angina attacks?

Patches are NOT intended for immediate relief. Sublingual tablets or spray have a fast onset of action and are used for immediate relief. The sublingual preparations can be used in combination with the patch.



5 When does the nitroglycerin patch start working after applying to the skin and how long does its effect last?

Steady-state concentrations are reached in approximately 2 hours and are maintained through constant drug delivery for as long as the patch is worn, up to ~24 hours. Once the patch is removed, the concentration of nitroglycerin in the blood decreases to undetectable levels within 2 hours.



7 Why does the nitroglycerin patch need to be removed every evening? Can it be kept on and replaced with a new patch in the morning?

Nitro patches are NOT applied continuously for 24-hours since tolerance to their effect may occur. It is important a nitrate-free period of 10-12-hours is maintained each day. The patch-free time should coincide with the period in which angina is least likely to occur (usually at night).



9 What are the most common side effects of nitroglycerin patch?

Headache, dizziness, fatigue, flushing, postural hypotension and mild local itching at the site of application.



11 What are possible signs and symptoms of nitroglycerin overdose and what should be done if a resident experiences this?

Overdose symptoms include persistent throbbing headache, severe hypotension, rapid heart rate, dizziness, flushing, confusion, nausea and vomiting. The patch should be removed immediately and the underlying skin scrubbed thoroughly with water. The goal is to increase central fluid volume by elevating the residents' legs, passively moving extremities and in severe cases, administering IV fluids under medical supervision.



2 Is nitroglycerin available in any other dosage forms besides transdermal patch?

Also available as an ointment, sublingual tablets, sublingual spray and injection.



4 What is the dosage of nitroglycerin patches?

The optimal dose is selected based upon clinical response, side effects, and effects of therapy on blood pressure. Patches are available as: 0.2 mg/hr, 0.4 mg/hr, 0.6 mg/hr, and 0.8 mg/hr. The nitro patch is prescribed at the lowest dose and gradually titrated upward depending on occurrence of angina attacks. It is usually applied once daily for a duration of 12-14 hours, then removed.



6 How is a nitroglycerin patch administered and where should it be applied?

Patches are applied every morning and removed every evening, avoiding the distal part of the extremities. The application site should be a dry, hairless area of unbroken skin, avoiding rashes, cuts, sores or scars. Application sites include; the upper arm, chest, or back and are rotated to prevent skin irritation from the patch.



8 Why is it important to check the location of the patch?

Always check the location of the patch. A resident may be using more than one type of patch and therefore identification of the correct patch is important to prevent medication incidents. If the removal location doesn't match the application site on the MAR then further investigation is needed.



10 How are used nitroglycerin patches disposed?

Dispose by folding sticky sides together and placing in a drug disposal container.



12 Are there any precautions associated with using the patch?

- Do NOT clean application site with alcohol, soap or other solvents as this may alter absorption of nitroglycerin
- Avoid heat on the application site as this may increase nitroglycerin absorption (e.g. heating pad, prolonged sun exposure, long hot baths, whirlpool or high fever)
- Do NOT cut or trim the patch, ask a pharmacist if dose adjustments are required