



Medicine Safety Tips For Medicine Patches

Some medicines are available as an adhesive patch that is applied directly to your skin. For example, nicotine patches are used to help people quit smoking. There are some pain relief patches that contain lidocaine that are used for muscle strains. These types of patches can be purchased over-the-counter (OTC). Other medicine patches are only available by prescription. Examples of prescription patches include medicines for birth control, nausea, and severe pain.

Patches are convenient to use, especially for people who have trouble swallowing tablets or capsules. They are designed to deliver medicine slowly over a longer period of time. Patches are generally worn for several days to a week before it is removed and a new one is applied. The amount of time a patch should be worn and when it should be replaced will differ depending on the medicine that is in the patch and the type of patch itself. It is important to follow the directions when using medicine patches and to keep them safe and secure at all times. Below are some important safety tips to keep in mind.

Here's What You Can Do:

Using your patch



Learn about your medicine patch. Not all medicine patches are alike. Always read the package information and instructions for the patch you are using before applying it to your skin.

Where to place the patch. Most medicine patches should be placed on skin that is clean, not irritated, and not extra hairy. It should not be placed over a cut or broken skin. Most medicine patches can be placed on your upper arm, chest, or upper back. Some patches may require a specific location. For example, a medicine patch that helps prevent nausea is placed behind the ear. Also, it is best to use a different location once you remove a used patch and apply a new one.

How long you will wear your patch. Each medicine patch is worn for a certain period of time. Some patches will require you to apply a new patch every day. Some patches should be worn for several days before it is replaced.

Applying your patch



Remove the medicine patch from the sealed package. The patch will be in sealed package. Some packages will need to be cut, while others may have a slit to tear open. Once open, a thin liner of film will be over the area that contains the medicine. This will need to be removed before applying the patch. Removing the liner will expose the medicine and the sticky adhesive that will hold the patch to your skin.



Avoid touching the medicine or sticky adhesive. Once the thin layer is removed, be careful not to touch the sticky side of the patch. This could interfere with the adhesive that allows the patch to stick to your skin. And by touching it, you will get the medicine on your fingers. In addition, if someone else is helping you apply the patch, touching the sticky part may expose them to the medicine.



Choose the place to apply the patch. Avoid placing the patch in any areas that are wet, irritated, open, or scabbed. Find a location free of hair and where moisturizer or other lotions have not been applied.



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Apply the patch to the skin. Press the patch (sticky side down) firmly against your skin. The patch is designed to stick directly to your skin. Avoid using excessive amounts of tape to secure the patch. Some patches come with an overlay cover. This is used to apply OVER the patch. Always make sure to apply the patch that contains the medicine directly on your skin and the overlay cover on top of the medicine patch.

Wearing your patch

- ✓ **Wear one patch at a time.** Always be sure to remove the used patch before applying a new patch. Even when patches are ready to be removed, they still contain some medicine. Leaving the used patch on your skin and applying a new one can result in you getting too much medicine.
- ✓ **Add the patch to your list of medicines.** Make sure to add any prescription or OTC medicine patches that you use to your list of medicines. Your healthcare team should know that you are wearing a medicine patch.
- ✓ **Keep track of where your patch is located.** Tell family members or caregivers the location of your medicine patch and when you switch the location. They may notice if you forgot to take the used one off.
- ✓ **Avoid heat sources.** Exposing medicine patches to heat could increase the amount of medicine absorbed from the patch into the body. It is important to avoid heating pads, electric blankets, sunbathing, hot baths, saunas, and hot tubs while wearing a medicine patch. Also avoid strenuous exercise, which can heat the body.
- ✓ **Never cut medicine patches.** It is very important to never cut a medicine patch. If the patch is cut, the medicine might be released too quickly, leading to a serious overdose. If a patch is torn or damaged, do not use it.
- ✓ **Check before getting an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).** Certain medicine patches contain a small amount of metal. If patches containing metal are worn during an MRI, your skin may burn. If you are scheduled for an MRI, be sure to tell the healthcare providers that you are wearing a patch and what it is.
- ✓ **Never share medicine patches.** Never share your patch with anyone else. Some patches, such as prescription patches that contain powerful pain medicine, may cause extreme harm and even death if worn by the wrong person.
- ✓ **Use caution around children.** Patches should never be referred to as a special Band-Aid, sticker, or tattoo. In doing so, a child may believe the patch is really a Band-Aid, sticker, or tattoo. They may believe it is all right to put the patch on themselves or on others.

Removing, disposing, and storing medicine patches.

- ✓ **Take off used patches.** When removing your patch, pull the edges to lift the patch from your skin. Carefully fold the sticky sides together. Some patches will need to be flushed down the toilet or disposed of in a different way. To learn more about disposal of medicine patches, visit the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Guide for Disposal of Unused Medicine.
- ✓ **Never put a used patch directly into the trashcan.** It is important that you dispose medicine patches safely. Putting a used patch directly into a trashcan can be dangerous, especially to children and pets. Remember, used patches still contain medicine!
- ✓ **Store your patches safely.** Always store your patches with other medicines, up and away and out of sight and reach from children. Store patches at the correct temperature. For example, do not keep unused patches in direct sunlight or hot places. Check the instructions from the manufacturer on the proper storage conditions.



Additional Safety Precautions

Use your patch as directed. Never use a patch in any other way. Only apply it to the skin as directed. For example, never chew or swallow a patch. This can be very dangerous and may cause death.

Routinely check that your patch is still secure. If your patch has fallen off, locate the patch immediately. If children or pets are nearby remove them from the area to be sure they do not come in contact with it.