

Battery-operated skin patch offers new option for migraine sufferers

March 26 2013



FDA recently approved Zecuity patch to treat the painful headaches.

(HealthDay)—The first skin patch approved to treat migraines offers patients an alternative to pills, nasal sprays and injections, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration says.

The agency approved the Zecuity patch in January 2013 as a treatment for migraines after they begin. The patch contains sumatriptan (brand name Imitrex), a widely prescribed drug for treating migraines, and wraps around the arm or thigh like an ACE bandage.

"Although consumers are familiar with using a patch for, say, [smoking cessation](#), this is the first patch the FDA has approved to treat migraines," Dr. Eric Bastings, a neurologist and deputy director of the FDA's Division of Neurology, said in an agency news release.

The battery-powered Zecuity patch uses an electrical current to move the drug through the skin over the course of four hours. A computer chip regulates the charge to ensure the patients receive the proper dosage.

There are some drawbacks, however.

The patch, which is about 8 inches long and 4 inches wide, is large enough that it can show when worn under short-sleeved shirts or shorts, and requires some privacy to put it on.

"For many people, popping a pill is a lot more immediate and simple," Bastings said.

But he noted that other methods of taking migraine medications also have downsides. The [nasal spray](#) can leave an unpleasant aftertaste and some people are uncomfortable with giving themselves injections.

"Many [migraine sufferers](#) experience debilitating pain—sometimes so acute that they can't swallow a pill," Bastings added.

In a clinical study, about 25 percent of patients complained of a painful sensation at the patch application site, while others were unhappy with the skin reddening that most patients developed after using the patch.

More than 30 million Americans suffer from migraines, according to the FDA.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more about [migraines](#).

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Citation: Battery-operated skin patch offers new option for migraine sufferers (2013, March 26)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-battery-operated-skin-patch-option-migraine.html>

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