

# Diclofenac gel/patch for pain and inflammation (Motusol, Voltarol Emulgel, Voltarol Medicated Plaster, Flector Tissugel)

If you are using gel, apply a thin layer and gently massage it into the affected area. Wash your hands well afterwards.

If you are using patches, apply one patch daily if it is for an ankle sprain. If it is for an elbow problem, apply one patch in the morning and one patch in the evening.

Diclofenac can cause your skin to become more sensitive to sunlight than normal. Protect the treated areas of your skin from bright sunlight.

## About diclofenac gel and patches

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Type of medicine | Topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID)                             |
| Used for         | Treating pain and swelling due to strains, sprains, backache or arthritis   |
| Also called      | Motusol®; Voltarol Emulgel®; Voltarol® Medicated Plaster; Flector® Tissugel |
| Available as     | Gel and medicated plaster (patch)   |

Diclofenac is a medicine called a [non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug](#). It is often referred to simply as 'an anti-inflammatory', or as an 'NSAID'. It works by preventing the production of some chemicals in your body which cause pain and inflammation. This leaflet deals with diclofenac when it is applied topically to the skin to ease muscular pains, sprains and strains.

When diclofenac is applied to the skin as a gel (or a patch), instead of it having an effect on all of your body, it only works on the area that you have applied it to. It is absorbed into your skin and then moves deeper into areas of your body where there is [inflammation](#) (for example, your muscle). Using a topical product means that the total amount of diclofenac in your body remains low. This in turn means that you are much less likely to have a side-effect to the medicine.

Diclofenac gel is available on prescription and you can buy some packs without a prescription at pharmacies. It is suitable for use by adults and by children over 14 years of age.

There is also a diclofenac gel which is used to treat skin damage caused by sun exposure – it is not interchangeable with the gel used for pain relief. Please see the separate medicine leaflet called [Diclofenac gel for sun damage](#) for more information about this product. Diclofenac can also be taken by mouth in the form of tablets or capsules, and can be used in the eye as an eye drop – there is more information about this in separate medicine leaflets called [Diclofenac for pain and inflammation](#) and [Diclofenac eye drops](#).

## Before using diclofenac

To make sure this is the right treatment for you, before you start using diclofenac gel it is important that your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you have asthma or any other allergic disorder.
- If you have a skin condition – eczema, for example.
- If you have, or have ever had, a stomach or intestinal ulcer.

- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a non-steroidal painkiller (such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, and indometacin) or to any other medicine.

## How to use diclofenac gel and patches

- Before you start using diclofenac, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about the gel/patches, and will provide you with a full list of any side-effects which you may experience.
- If you are using the gel, apply a thin layer and gently massage it into the affected area. Wash your hands well afterwards. Your doctor or pharmacist will recommend how often and for how long you should use the gel – for strains and sprains this is usually three or four times a day for up to 14 days. If the pain and inflammation have not gone within these two weeks, make an appointment to see your doctor to make sure that the treatment is suitable for you to continue with.
- There is a double-strength gel available from pharmacies which only needs to be applied twice a day. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the product you are using.
- If you have an ankle sprain or a problem with your elbow, you may be prescribed diclofenac patches. Each patch can be conveniently applied to the area required. Your doctor will tell you how often to use the patches – the usual dose is to apply one patch twice a day for up to seven days. Only wear one patch at a time.
- To use a patch, take it from the packaging, remove the plastic film and press it gently but firmly on to the painful area. Remember to remove the used patch before applying a fresh patch.

## Getting the most from your treatment

- Diclofenac gel may cause your skin to become more sensitive to sunlight than normal. Do not use sunbeds, and protect any treated areas from strong sunlight until you know how your skin reacts.
- Try to avoid the gel coming into contact with your eyes, and do not apply it to any broken or irritated areas of your skin. If this does happen by accident, wash it off with warm water as soon as possible.

- It is important that you don't cover any area of skin treated with the gel with any dressings or bandages. This is because more diclofenac may be absorbed by your skin than is intended, and this could lead to unwanted effects.
- Do not wear diclofenac patches whilst swimming, bathing or showering.

## Can diclofenac gel cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the ones associated with diclofenac gel, although these do not commonly occur. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your gel. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

| Diclofenac gel side-effects  | What can I do if I experience this?   |
|--|---|
| Rash, itching, or redness at the site of application   | If this is severe, stop using diclofenac and ask your doctor or pharmacist for further advice |
| Using large amounts of gel can very occasionally lead to allergic-type reactions and breathing problems in some people | Stop using diclofenac and contact a doctor for further advice                                 |

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the gel, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

## How to store diclofenac gel and patches

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

# Important information about all medicines

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Make sure that the person supplying this medicine knows about any other medicines that you are using. This includes medicines you buy and herbal and homeopathic medicines.

If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are safe to use with your other medicines.

If you suspect that someone has swallowed some of this product, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are using.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Report suspected side effects to medicines, vaccines, e-cigarettes, medical device incidents, defective or falsified (fake) products to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to ensure safe and effective use.

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## Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Voltarol® 1.16% Emulgel, gel](#); Haleon UK Trading Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated March 2023.

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Voltarol® 140 mg Medicated Plaster](#); GlaxoSmithKline Dungarvan Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated July 2022.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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