

Information for Adult Patients who are Prescribed

# Duloxetine

For the Treatment of Pain



This information is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. We advise you to read the manufacturer's information for patients, which your pharmacist will supply with your medicine. Please keep all medicines away from children, vulnerable adults or pets.

## **Why have I been prescribed duloxetine?**

Duloxetine is a medicine used to treat some types of persistent pain. It is especially good for nerve pain, such as burning, shooting or stabbing pain.

Duloxetine is also licensed to treat depression, anxiety and stress incontinence in women. You are on this medicine to treat your pain.

## **How does duloxetine work?**

Duloxetine works by changing the way that nerves send messages to your brain. If the messages are reduced, then the pain should also be reduced.

## **How long will it take to work?**

It may take 2 - 4 weeks before you feel pain relief. It may take longer (up to 2 months) to get to the right dose for you and to allow the medicine to build up in your body.

Duloxetine does not work for everyone. If you do not feel any improvement in your pain after 6 – 8 weeks you should not suddenly stop taking the tablets, but speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

## **What should I expect?**

It is rarely possible to help long-term pain completely by using medicines alone. This is because long-term pain arises through many different mechanisms, and most medicines only work for one of these.

In trials, most medicines for long-term pain provide on average a 30% reduction in pain. Some pains do not seem to respond to any painkilling medicines.

Medicines work best if you combine them with other ways of managing symptoms such as regular activity and exercise and doing things that are satisfying or enjoyable, such as work, study and social activities. Setting goals to help improve your life is an important way to see if these medicines are helping.

You should discuss, with your doctor, what you expect from the treatment.

## When should I take it?

Usually you should take duloxetine once a day, but you can also take it twice a day. Your doctor will advise you on this. It is important to take your duloxetine dose regularly, as prescribed, for it to work properly. It is not a medication that you should use on an 'as required' basis.

Usually you start on a low dose of duloxetine and increase this slowly to find the best dose for you. You and your doctor, nurse or community pharmacist will decide how quickly you increase your medicine.

Typically you will start on a dose of 30mg at night. After 1-4 weeks this would usually increase to 60mg. You may increase it more slowly if you feel you are getting side effects. You can stay at a lower dose if you are getting good pain relief (you don't have to keep increasing the dose if you do not need to).

It is best to take duloxetine at the same time each day. If you are taking it once a day in the morning and you feel drowsy, try taking it in the evening.

## How do I take duloxetine?

You should swallow the capsule whole, with a glass of water. You can take duloxetine before or after food.

## What if I forget or miss a dose?

Take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose and take the next dose at the usual time. **Do not take two doses at the same time.**

## What are the possible side effects?

We advise you to read the information leaflet that is included with your medication. Listed below are some side effects associated with duloxetine. The full list of potential side effects can be found in the leaflet that comes with the medication.

<b>Very Common</b> May affect more than 1 in 10 people	<b>Common</b> May affect up to 1 in 10 people
Feeling sick Dry mouth Constipation Headache	Blurred vision Feeling tired Sleepiness Difficulty sleeping Dizziness Diarrhoea Headache Decreased appetite Indigestion/Abdominal pain Increased blood pressure Palpitation Flushing Flatulence Anxiety Agitation Difficulty sleeping Abnormal dreams Tremor

Generally side effects are worse after starting duloxetine or increasing the dose. It is important to persist in taking duloxetine as these side effects are usually mild and will wear off after several days.

Drowsiness is usually temporary. If you feel drowsy, you should not drive or operate machinery.

Drowsiness may occur as you increase your dose. If you feel especially drowsy in the morning it may help to take your duloxetine dose earlier in the evening.

The risk of drowsiness may increase if you are taking other medicines for pain such as other antidepressant medications, anticonvulsants or morphine like medicines.

If these side effects are severe, or last for more than a few days, or if you experience blurred vision, trembling, irregular heart beat, difficulty passing urine or a reaction to this medication you should get advice from your GP, Community Pharmacist or **NHS 24 on 111**.

Also, you can help make sure medicines remain as safe as possible by reporting any unwanted side-effects via the internet at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) alternatively you can call Freephone **0808 100 3352**

## **Can I take this medication long-term?**

Yes, if it helps. You may wish to reduce treatment every so often, to check if your pain is still a problem. You should speak to your GP or pain specialist about gradually reducing your dose over time.

## **Can I drive?**

Please see note above, If you experience drowsiness you should not drive. Remember, you are responsible for deciding whether you are fit to drive.

## Can I drink alcohol?

Alcohol and duloxetine together cause sleepiness and poor concentration.

You should avoid alcohol completely when you first start taking duloxetine or when you increase your dose. You should also avoid alcohol if you are going to drive or operate machinery.

Once you are on a stable dose, you should be able to drink modest amounts of alcohol, **but only if the drowsiness has stopped**. You must take care with alcohol if you are also prescribed other medications that can cause sleepiness and poor concentration.

## What should I tell the doctor?

- If you are allergic to any medicines.
- If you are taking any other medications or herbal medications.
- If you have epilepsy or glaucoma.
- If you are taking any medicines that make you feel sleepy.
- If you are taking any antidepressant medications.
- If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning to become pregnant.
- If you have a bleeding disorder that increases your risk of bleeding.
- If you are taking any anticoagulants, antiplatelet agents or other medicines to thin the blood such as warfarin.
- If you have kidney or liver problems.
- If you have a heart condition or high blood pressure.
- If you have ever had 'high' moods, such as mania in bipolar disorder.
- If you are taking an antibiotic called ciprofloxacin.

## What if I want to stop taking duloxetine?

Do not stop taking duloxetine suddenly as you might experience withdrawal symptoms. Speak to your healthcare professional (doctor, nurse, or pharmacist) who will be able to give you advice about stopping your medication.

### **Remember!**

- Don't run out of medicine
- Ask for a repeat prescription before your medicine is finished
- If you have any queries you can ask your pharmacist, GP, or NHS 24 (call 111 for free from landlines or mobiles)

For more information about managing chronic pain see [www.paindata.org](http://www.paindata.org)

Much of the information in this document has been reproduced from the Faculty of Pain Medicine's patient information leaflet of a similar name which can be accessed here: <https://www.british-painsociety.org/british-pain-society-publications/patient-publications/>

