

Patient information

Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN)

The information in this leaflet is intended for general guidance. If your doctor has given you different advice, follow their instructions.

Your GP may give you the same medicine known by a different name—the brand name. You should always check with your GP or pharmacist if you are unsure.

What is GTN?

GTN is a fast acting drug used to relieve chest pain quickly.

GTN can come in sprays called Nitrolingual, Coro-Nitro and Nitromin or in tablets to put under your tongue (sublingual).

How does it work?

GTN acts by dilating or widening blood vessels. By dilating your arterial blood vessels around your heart muscle (coronary arteries), it will increase the oxygen supply to your heart. With increased blood supply to your heart muscle, the chest pain you are experiencing should ease.

How do I use sublingual GTN to relieve chest pain?

When you experience chest pain, sit down and rest. Spray once under the tongue or place a GTN tablet under your tongue. Do not eat, drink or smoke at this time, as this will affect the medication being passed into the bloodstream.

Wait 5 minutes. If discomfort is still present spray once or put a tablet under the tongue again.

Wait a further 5 minutes. If discomfort continues repeat once more.

Wait 5 minutes. If discomfort is still present ring 999 for an ambulance.

Possible side effects

- The most common is a 'pounding' headache, which may only be short lived. Over the counter painkillers, eg Paracetamol, may be used if necessary but please inform your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
- Dizziness—this can be avoided by sitting down when using GTN.
- GTN can also cause you to feel flushed.

General Points

It is important that the tablets are only kept in their original glass container, not in metal or plastic containers as it will reduce their effectiveness. They will also deteriorate on exposure to air so any tablets not used after 8 weeks from opening the bottle should be discarded. This does NOT apply to GTN sprays.

Please be aware that GTN is used not only as a pain killer but to protect the heart from damage that may occur from a prolonged angina attack.

If you are taking any of the following tablets for erectile dysfunction:

Viagra (Sildenafil)

Cialis (Tadalafil)

Levitra (Vardenafil)

It is very important that if you develop chest pain and have taken one of these tablets in the preceding 24 hours that you do not use your GTN spray / tablet but call for medical help immediately.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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