

Patient information

Tricyclics and their use in the treatment of pain and insomnia

Why do I need a tricyclic?

Tricyclics are a family of medicines which include Amitriptyline, Dothiepin (Dosulepin), Imipramine, Lofepramine and Nortriptyline. You have been prescribed:

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Tricyclics are used to treat nerve pain. This type of pain is often not relieved by conventional painkillers. Tricyclics can be used in combination with other painkillers to improve your pain relief.

When pain goes on for long periods of time it can interfere with your usual sleep pattern so that you do not wake in the morning feeling refreshed. This in turn can make it more difficult to cope with pain so sleep is disturbed further. This vicious circle can eventually lead to a state where pain is badly controlled and sleep is poor.

Tricyclics: are they used for treating depression?

Yes, they are used for treating depression. This does NOT mean that your doctor feels that you are depressed. The use of tricyclics in chronic pain is termed unlicensed, which means that this is not the normal use for the medicine. In this case research has shown that this group of medicines can be effective in treating this condition. The doses of tricyclics used for improving pain and sleep patterns are smaller than those used for depression. Remember, the aim of treatment is to reduce pain, establish a sleep pattern and break the vicious cycle of pain.

How should I take a tricyclic?

You should take a tricyclic in addition to your current tablets unless told otherwise. You should take the tablet(s) as a single dose at night time about one hour before you

usually go to sleep. If you feel drowsy first thing in the morning you should take the tablets earlier in the evening. Sometimes the dose will need to be adjusted to find the right dose for you.

How quickly do tricyclics work?

You should notice that your pain starts to reduce over one to two weeks after starting a tricyclic. It may be six weeks or longer before you begin to notice any improvement in your sleep pattern. Some feel the benefit straight away. Your treatment will be reviewed when you next see the doctor or nurse.

How long will I have to take tricyclic for?

We recommend taking this medication for a minimum of three months. If it is helpful you may be taking it for many months, so you will need repeat prescriptions from your GP. There is no possibility of you becoming addicted to the tablets. It is also important that you continue your regular painkillers, unless you have been advised to stop taking them by your doctor.

Do I need any tests whilst I am taking a tricyclic?

No, you will not need any special checks whilst you are taking this medication.

Are there are side effects?

All drugs have side effects, but not everyone will experience them. Side effects will usually appear soon after you start taking the medication, but they should become less troublesome by the end of the first week. The most common side effects of a tricyclic are a dry mouth and drowsiness (this is why the tablets should be taken at night). Other side effects are detailed on the drug information leaflet supplied with the tablets.

Can I drink alcohol whilst taking a tricyclic?

If the tricyclic makes you feel tired or gives you other side effects, then drinking alcohol may increase these side effects. Because of this, we advise that you should avoid drinking alcohol.

Is it safe for me to drive or operate machinery whilst I'm taking tricyclic?

Tricyclics may cause drowsiness. If you feel affected by this, we advise that you should not drive or operate complex machinery until the effects have worn off.

Is it safe for me to take other medicines whilst I'm receiving treatment with a tricyclic?

Before you take or buy any new medicines, including herbal remedies, tell your doctor or pharmacist that you are taking a tricyclic and ask their advice.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose?

This medication is normally taken in the evening. If you forget or skip a dose, then continue as normal the next day.

DO NOT double up to make up for your missed dose.

Stopping tricyclics

Do not stop taking your tricyclic unless your doctor tells you to.

Remember:

This medicine has been prescribed for you. It should not be taken by anyone else.

Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice.

If you require more information or have any questions, please speak to your doctor, or contact the Clinical Nurse Specialists on 01284 712528.

Keep all medicines out of the reach of children

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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