

Patient information

Tapentadol

The use of tapentadol to treat persistent pain

Your Pain Specialist has recommended Tapentadol to treat your pain. Tapentadol is a new drug that is used to treat moderate to severe pain. It belongs to a class of medications called opioids. Opioids refer to morphine and morphine type medicines.

It is important you read the British Pain Society's (BPS) patient information booklet on 'The Use of Opioids for Persistent Pain'. This leaflet will explain in greater detail the beneficial effects and safety issues of taking opioid medicines. If you do not have a copy of this leaflet, one will be sent to you through the post. If, however, you would like to access the leaflet through the internet the web address is as follows:

http://www.britishpainsociety.org/book_opioid_patient.pdf

Before agreeing to take Tapentadol it is **very important** to consider the practicalities of taking this opioid in regards to firstly attending the West Suffolk Hospital for prescriptions and secondly being available for appointments.

How will I obtain prescriptions?

Presently Tapentadol can only be prescribed by a Doctor or a Clinical Nurse Specialist within the Pain Clinic. This means you, or an authorised person that you select, must be prepared to travel to the West Suffolk Hospital Pharmacy Department to pick up repeat prescriptions. Repeat prescriptions will be issued at intervals **no longer** than 4 weeks apart. Your Pain Consultant may wish to start you on a low dose of Tapentadol and increase the dose gradually. As a result, your prescription may need changing as the dose alters. Therefore you may need initially to be prepared to travel to the West Suffolk Hospital more frequently than once a month to collect Tapentadol. Once you are on a stable dose of Tapentadol the situation in regards to obtaining repeat prescriptions will depend on which County you live in.

- Suffolk: GPs will take over repeat prescribing
- Norfolk: GPs may agree to take on repeat prescribing under a shared care agreement with the Pain Clinic
- Cambridge: Presently all repeat prescriptions will need to be obtained from the Pain Clinic at the West Suffolk Hospital.

- Other counties: Check with your GP practice to see if your GP can prescribe Tapentadol.

It is important that you make an informed decision whether you can commit to travelling into the hospital for repeat prescriptions, as suddenly stopping Tapentadol will result in unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. The Pain Clinic will provide the West Suffolk Hospital Pharmacy Department with the prescriptions and once the prescription is ready to be collected you will be contacted by a member of staff from the Pharmacy Department. Pharmacy require up to 5 days to dispense Tapentadol therefore telephone review assessment appointments need to be organized approximately 5-10 days before your prescription supplies run out.

More about the initial appointment at the opioid clinic

Once you and your pain doctor have decided that an opioid trial involving Tapentadol will take place, you will be allocated a named Clinical Nurse Specialist who will send you an appointment in the Opioid Clinic. With the appointment letter you will receive questionnaires, consent and agreement forms plus the BPS booklet on opioid therapy for persistent pain.

Please complete the questionnaires, read and sign the consent and agreement documents and return all the documentation when you attend for your appointment in the Opioid Clinic.

At this appointment the clinical nurse specialist will undertake an assessment, provide information and deal with any questions you may have. Please allow approximately up to two hours for this appointment as bloods tests and an ECG may also be required. The time required is variable between individuals

Follow up appointments

Your Clinical Nurse Specialist will also review your progress and whether the benefits of taking this medicine outweigh the risks. Review appointments will take place approximately weekly. These appointments are normally by telephone.

Who to call for advice

In between appointments, advice regarding Tapentadol can be sought by phoning the clinical nurse specialists answer phone on **01284 712528**. This advice line is available Monday to Friday between the hours of 08.00hrs and 16.00hrs only. If you have an urgent query out of hours then we would advise you to contact normal out of hours NHS services.

Please remember that Tapentadol is a new drug and many health professionals are currently not familiar with its use. We would therefore advise all non urgent questions to be redirected to the Pain Clinic relating to this drug.

It is most important that you inform the Pain Clinic if:

- *you are under 18 years of age*
- *you have a history of severe allergies including an allergy to Tapentadol*
- *You think you might be pregnant or are planning to get pregnant*
- *You are breast feeding*
- *You are known to have the rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption*
- *You have a history of mental illness or drug or alcohol addiction*
- *you are currently taking the following medications: monoamine oxidase inhibitors or within 14 days of such therapy or any other antidepressant.*
- *You have any of the following conditions: bowel strictures, breathing disorders, liver or kidney disease, epilepsy or seizure disorders, gallbladder disease or problems with your pancreas.*

What are the beneficial effects of taking Tapentadol?

Tapentadol sustained release is prescribed for the management of severe chronic pain.

Evidence suggests that side effects are favourable compared to other opioids. During your initial opioid clinic appointment we will ask you to make realistic goals that you would like to achieve with an improvement in pain control. We will use these goals alongside other information you provide to assess how beneficial Tapentadol is for you.

What are the side effects of taking Tapentadol?

No drug is risk free. Like all opioid medicines Tapentadol can cause side effects. Very common side effects affecting more than 1 in 10 patients include: feeling sick, constipation, dizziness, drowsiness, and headache. A serious but uncommon side effect is an allergic reaction, symptoms of which include wheeziness, difficulty breathing, swelling of the lips, eyelids or face, a rash or itching. A full list of side effect is outlined in the product information leaflet provided by the drug company.

If taken with antidepressants, please let the Pain Clinic or out of hours services know immediately if you become agitated, hallucinate, lose consciousness, or experience a fast heart rate, uncoordinated movement, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. These symptoms may indicate Serotonin Syndrome. With antidepressants, the risk of seizures are increased if the recommended dose range of Tapentadol is exceeded.

Since Tapentadol may be habit forming, only take Tapentadol as prescribed by your Pain

Consultant. Please ensure you do not increase the dose or the frequency of taking this medication without authorisation.

How should I take Tapentadol?

You need to take Tapentadol exactly as prescribed by your Doctor and outlined in the product information leaflet.

There are different strengths of the extended release form of Tapentadol. Depending on your prescription the West Suffolk Hospital Pharmacy Department may prescribe differing strengths. Please be vigilant and take the correct dose. It is also important not to escalate or stop taking this drug without authorisation by your pain doctor.

Tapentadol should be taken with a full glass of water, with or without food. **DO NOT crush, chew, break or dissolve the extended release tablet.** It must be swallowed whole as breaking the tablet will result in too much of the drug being released at once and rapid absorption of a dose that may be potentially fatal.

If I miss a dose what shall I do?

If you have forgotten to take your Tapentadol, your pain is likely to return. **DO NOT** take a double dose to make up for a forgotten dose. Take the normal prescribed dose when it is next due.

In the case of accidentally overdosing what shall I do?

Always seek medical advice, even if you feel well, as too much Tapentadol may be life-threatening. Please read the product information sheet provided by the drug company for more information on life threatening symptoms.

What to avoid whilst taking Tapentadol?

You should inform the DVLA if you are taking Tapentadol or any other opioid for persistent pain. Driving should be avoided when commencing therapy, or during periods of dose adjustment, when you are at a greater risk of feeling drowsy, dizzy, having blurred vision or a slow reaction time . If these symptoms are being experienced then do not use tools or machinery.

Alcohol should be avoided as it can lead to excessive drowsiness.

You need to ensure that the Doctor who prescribes Tapentadol is aware of all the medicines you are taking, including food and herbal supplements such as St John's Wort.

Do I need to take any special precautions?

The following safety precautions are important:

- **DO NOT** suddenly stop taking Tapentadol or you may experience a range of unpleasant side effects.
- Never share Tapentadol with anyone.
- Store Tapentadol in a safe place where other people cannot access it. We advise storing opioids in a locked cupboard.
- It is also advisable to keep a track on the usage of Tapentadol in case someone is accessing your prescription. Keeping a record will also help as a reminder to take your tablets.
- Please report any side effects or if Tapentadol is not lasting 12 hours.
- Unused tablets should be returned to a Pharmacy department. This minimises the risk of Tapentadol being available to others since it is a drug of abuse. Please do not flush Tapentadol down the toilet or throw tablets away in dustbins.
- Do not combine Tapentadol with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants such as sleeping tablets and tranquilizers.
- Please let the Pain Clinic know if you are prescribed antidepressants.
- Never mix Tapentadol into a liquid to snort or inject. Deaths have occurred with opioids being misused for recreational purposes.
- **As previously mentioned, driving should be avoided when commencing therapy or during periods of dose adjustment, when you are at a greater risk of feeling drowsy, dizzy, having blurred vision or a slow reaction time.**

Points to remember

- Please bring your glasses, if you need them for reading, to the opioid clinic.
- Please bring in a list of all your current medication including medication for pain relief, including private medication such as calcium tablets.
- Please read the British Pain Society's patient information booklet on 'The Use of Opioids for Persistent Pain'.
- Please bring in the completed questionnaires.
- Please bring in the signed consent and agreement documents.
- If there is any possibility that you may be pregnant or are breast feeding, please inform the Pain Clinic before your appointment. on 01284 712528

Useful phone numbers:

Pain Clinic - Clinical Nurse Specialist - 01284 712528

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>

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