Patient Information

Information for patients prescribed Tramadol

What is tramadol used for?
Tramadol is an opioid, which also affects different chemicals that can help manage pain. It is used in the management of moderate to severe pain and can also be helpful in the management of neuropathic (nerve) pain.

When and how should I take tramadol?
- As prescribed by your doctor.
- Tramadol should be swallowed whole with a glass of water.
- Tramadol can be taken with or without food and should not be chewed.
- Do not take more than prescribed.

How long does it take to work?
Tramadol comes in immediate release and slow release formulations; please check which one you are taking. The immediate release starts to work in 30-45 minutes after ingestion and the effect lasts up to 6 hours. Slow release tramadol should be taken either 12 hours apart at regular intervals or once every 24 hours, depending on the slow release tramadol you are prescribed.

What are the side effects of tramadol?
If you have any of these side effects and they are severe, please contact your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

Common side effects
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Sleepiness
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Dry mouth
- Sweating

Uncommon side effects
- Irregular, rapid beating or pulsation of the heart
- Increased heartbeat
- Low blood pressure (especially when standing upright)
- Diarrhoea
- Gastrointestinal irritation (a feeling of pressure in the stomach, bloating)
- Skin disorders (e.g. itchiness, rash, sudden onset of skin redness)
- Seizures
- Wheezing and difficulty breathing

Can I take it long-term?
Yes, if you find it helpful. Please consider reviewing your medication with your doctors to assess if there is still a need to take it.
Can I drink alcohol?
Alcohol can increase the sedative effects of tramadol. It is advisable to abstain from alcohol when you start taking tramadol. Once you are on a stable dose, you may drink alcohol in moderation, but please be cautious as it may make you more drowsy than normal.

Can I drive?
It is advised that you do not drive if you have recently started taking tramadol or if you have recently changed doses. Once on a stable dose you can drive, as long as you do not feel drowsy. It remains the responsibility of all drivers, including patients, to consider whether they believe their driving may be impaired on every occasion when they drive.

What should I tell the doctor?
- If you are allergic to the drug.
- If you are taking any other medications, including herbal and over the counter medications.
- Any illicit drugs you may be taking.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the near future.
- If you have a history of epilepsy or fits.
- If you are taking any antidepressant medicines, especially MAOI (monoamine oxidase inhibitors).
- If you have liver or kidney problems.
- If you have or have had a history of excessive alcohol use, recreational drug use or an addiction to prescription or over the counter medication.

What do I do if I forget a dose?
- Do not take 2 doses at once.
- Take it as soon as you remember.

What do I do if I want to stop taking tramadol?
If you would like to stop taking tramadol, please discuss it with your doctor or pharmacist. Please do not stop tramadol suddenly as this can cause withdrawal type symptoms.

Where can I find more information on tramadol?
- Please ask your prescriber for more information.
- Your pharmacist can answer your questions.
- Your medication packet will contain a patient information leaflet for you to read.
- A good website to use is the Electronic Medical Compendium (search for EMC) or go directly to https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/