Patient Information

Information for patients prescribed Nortriptyline

What is nortriptyline used for?

Nortriptyline is used to treat many different types of pain, including acute and chronic pain. Nortriptyline is mainly helpful in managing neuropathic pain which may be described as burning, shooting or stabbing and may keep you awake at night. It is a tricyclic antidepressant, which in high doses is used to treat depression and in lower doses helps to manage pain.

When and how should I take nortriptyline?

- Nortriptyline should be taken at night, at least one hour before going to bed. If you find they make you feel drowsy the next day, try taking it earlier in the evening.
- Take your nortriptyline with a full glass of water.
- Do not take on an empty stomach.
- Do not take more than prescribed.

How long does it take to work?

- Everyone is different; some people notice some initial benefit within the first 2 weeks.
- Nortriptyline does not work for everyone, if you do not feel any benefit, do not stop taking it suddenly. Please discuss with your GP before stopping.

What are the side effects of nortriptyline?

Most side effects are mild and they tend to go after a few doses. If you have any of these side effects and they are severe, please seek urgent medical assistance.

Common side effects

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Constipation
- Sweating

Less common side effects

- Fainting
- Trembling
- Irregular heartbeat
- Blurred vision
- Problems passing water

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 nortriptyline. It is advisable to abstain from alcohol when you start taking nortriptyline or adjust your dose. 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 nortriptyline 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.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the near future.
- If you have had a heart attack recently or have had heart problems.
- If you have a history of epilepsy or fits.
- If you have glaucoma.
- If you have difficulty passing water.
- If you have thyroid disease.
- If you have or have had mental health problems.
- If you are taking any antidepressant medicines, especially MAOI (monoamine oxidase inhibitor).

What do I do if I forget a dose?
- Take it as soon as you remember, that night.
- Do not take 2 doses at once.
- Do not take this medication in the morning.

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

Where can I find more information on nortriptyline?
- 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 EMC which can be found at https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/