

Dr D Tonucci MB ChB DCH FRCA FFPMRCA

Pain Management Consultant

Patient Information

Duloxetine

Why have I been prescribed duloxetine?

- Duloxetine is used to treat some types of persistent pain.
- It is especially good for nerve pain, such as burning, shooting or stabbing pain, and for pain that keeps you awake at night.
- Duloxetine belongs to the group of medicines called Serotonin Noradrenergic Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRI) that are also used to treat depression.
- You may notice that information from the manufacturer may not mention your type of pain.

How does duloxetine work?

- Duloxetine works by increasing the amount of specific nerve transmitters in the nervous system, reducing pain messages arriving in the brain.

When should I take it?

- It is best to take duloxetine at the same time each day. Most people take it in the morning. If you find that you feel drowsy after taking it in the morning, try taking it in the evening.

How is duloxetine taken?

- The capsules should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water.
- Duloxetine may be taken on an empty or full stomach.
- You will be told how much to start taking and when to increase the dose. The table at the end of the leaflet will help you remember when to increase the dose.
- Do not take more than prescribed.

How long will it take to work?

- Every patient is different. You may notice some initial benefit within 1 week, however it may take up to 1 month for a full effect. Your doctor may need to increase the dose to get the maximum effect.
- Duloxetine does not work for everyone. If you do not feel any improvement in your pain, do not suddenly stop taking the tablets but speak to your doctor.

What are the possible side effects?

- Most side effects are mild and can be expected to go away after a few doses.
- Common side effects include; headache, drowsiness, sickness (nausea), dizziness, blurred vision and dry mouth. If you have these side effects and they are severe contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.
- Less common side effects include loss of appetite, flushes, raised blood pressure, difficulty sleeping, feeling anxious, shaky and increased sweating. If any of these side effects occur contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Dr D Tonucci MB ChB DCH FRCA FFPMRCA

Pain Management Consultant

Can I take this medication long-term?

- Yes, if it helps. You may wish to reduce treatment every so often, to check if your pain is still a problem. This should be done with the advice of your GP or pain specialist, gradually reducing your medication over a period of time.

Can I drink alcohol?

- Alcohol increases the sedative effects of duloxetine, it is best not to drink alcohol when you start taking it. Once settled on a steady dose, you may drink alcohol in moderation but it may make you more drowsy than normal.

Can I drive?

- Duloxetine may cause drowsiness. If this happens, do not drive.

What should I tell the doctor?

- If you are allergic to any drugs
- If you are taking any other medicines or herbal medicines
- If you have epilepsy or a glaucoma
- If you are taking any medicine that causes sleepiness (e.g. strong painkillers such as morphine) or increases the level of serotonin (e.g. tramadol, SSRIs and SNRIs taken for depression)
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the future
- If you take any anticoagulants, antiplatelet agents or other drugs to thin the blood.
- If you have or have had a mental health problem
- If you have kidney or liver problems
- If you are taking any antidepressant
- If you are taking ciprofloxacin, an antibiotic used to treat infections

What if I forget or miss a dose?

- Take it as soon as you remember.
- If you only take one dose in the morning and you miss the dose, do not take the medicine in the evening. Wait until the next morning and skip the missed dose.
- Do not take two doses together.

What if I want to stop taking duloxetine?

- If you stop taking duloxetine suddenly, you might experience withdrawal symptoms. Speak to your healthcare professional (doctor, nurse, pharmacist) who will be able to supervise a gradual reduction.