

# How to take your Triptan Painkiller

Information and advice for patients

## Neurology

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There are currently seven triptans available for treating pain in headache. Whilst usually used in headaches with migraine features they can be useful in other headaches, which is why their use has been suggested.

**Sumatriptan (Imigran)** - available as a tablet 50-100mg (High dose should be trialled if no side effects), nasal spray, rapid dispersible or subcutaneous injection.

**Rizatriptan (Maxalt)** - available as a tablet or wafer.

**Zolmitriptan (Zomig)** - available as a tablet, rapid dispersible or nasal spray.

**Eletriptan (Relpax)** - available as a tablet.

**Almotriptan (Almogran)** - available as a tablet.

Longer half-life triptans listed below for longer attacks.

**Frovatriptan (Migard)** - available as a tablet.

**Naratriptan (Naramig)** - available as a tablet.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has made recommendations based on research evidence on how to take your triptan to maximise the effectiveness. If you wish to look at this information, please go to the NICE website at [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk) and search for *Headaches in over 12s: diagnosis and management clinical guideline [CG150]*.

Providing you do not have asthma, previous history of intestinal ulcers, bleeds, crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis or severe kidney disease which prevents the use anti-inflammatory drugs, the following recommendations are for you to take:

**Triptan + anti-inflammatory tablet + anti-sickness tablet together**

If you cannot take anti-inflammatories because of allergy or the above conditions, you can take:

**Triptan + anti-inflammatory tablet + anti-sickness tablet together**

If you cannot take anti-inflammatories because of allergy or the above conditions, you can take:

**Triptan + 2 Paracetamol + anti-sickness tablet together**

As soon as you recognise the headache attack has started take the combination of painkillers straight away. The earlier you take these the more likely they are to work with the aim to significantly improve the headache within two to four hours.

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### Triptans in pregnancy and breast feeding.

Current recommendations from the NICE (2012) Guideline CG150, are that triptans **CAN** be used in pregnancy and breast feeding if attacks are disabling and other analgesics are not working. Evidence however comes from pregnancy registers rather than clinical trial. Thus far, no evidence of increased risk of miscarriage, still births or birth defects has been found compared to the general population.

### There are several anti-inflammatories you may be given. These could include:

- Naproxen 500mgs (Maximum of twice per day)
- Ibuprofen 800mgs (Maximum of three times per day)
- Diclofenac 75mgs (Maximum of twice per day)
- Diclofenac 50-100mg rectal suppository (Maximum dose 150mgs per day)
- Indometacin 100mg Suppository (Maximum dose 200mgs per day)

### There are several anti-sickness tablets you may be given. These include:

- Prochlorperazine 5mgs (Stemetil, maximum of three times per day)
- Metoclopramide 10mgs (Maxalon, maximum of three times per day)
- Domperidone 10mgs (Motillium, maximum of three times per day)
- Ondansetron 4mgs-8mgs (tablet or oro-dispersible (Zofran), maximum 16mgs per day)

### What to do if the first dose of combined painkillers doesn't work

If after the first try at combining the painkillers together this does not improve the pain, then **after two hours repeat your triptan alone but once only.**

After six hours from taking the first set of combined painkillers you are still in pain, your anti-inflammatory can be repeated. If taking paracetamol, this can be repeated after four hours. The maximum doses of anti-inflammatory tablets are included above. The maximum dose of any paracetamol containing tablets is eight tablets per day.

After six hours from taking the first set of combined painkillers the pain has not improved, then your anti-sickness tablet can be repeated every 6 hours as needed.

**Do Not Exceed** the maximum recommended dose of any of your triptans, paracetamol, anti-inflammatories, or anti-sickness tablets in a twenty-four period as these can have serious detrimental effects.

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### What is Medication Overuse Headache?

You will have been told not to take any form of painkiller on more than two days per week even if you have headache on more days than this. This is because over using painkillers, even within the correct dosing levels can induce medication overuse headache. This is where the painkillers over time begin to irritate the brain and can then cause headache thus causing an episodic headache to become daily. They will also reduce the chance of your preventative medications working making your headaches much more difficult to manage. Please take time to look at the Migraine Trust Website for other useful information to manage your headaches.

#### Contraindications.

- Ischaemic heart disease; peripheral vascular disease; previous cerebrovascular accident (stroke); severe uncontrolled hypertension.
- Triptans DO NOT need restricting in patients on SSRI's/SNRI's.
- Triptans are safe with non-motor aura. A patient with motor aura is a grey area but the potential benefits may outweigh the potential risk.
- 7% of patients may experience triptan sensation such as Burning and tingling in the chest and limbs.

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### Further information

#### The migraine trust

<https://migrainetrust.org/>

(Website accessed & checked 01 August 2022)

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites

[www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

National institute for health and care excellence (NICE) (2012). Headaches in over 12s: diagnosis and management clinical guideline [CG150]. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg150> (Accessed 01 August 2022).

British association for the study of headache (BASH) (2019) BASH guidelines 2019. Available at: <https://www.bash.org.uk/guidelines/> (Accessed 01 August 2022).

International headache society (IHS) (2021). The international classification of headache disorders (ICHD-3). 3rd ed. Available at: <https://ichd-3.org/> (Accessed 01 August 2022).

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If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email [swbh.library@nhs.net](mailto:swbh.library@nhs.net).



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