

Duloxetine

Information and advice for patients

Pain Management

What is Duloxetine?

Duloxetine is a type of anti-depressant medication which has been shown to have a beneficial effect on some types of pain. It is thought to work by increasing the activity of Serotonin and Noradrenaline, 2 naturally occurring substances in the brain. Increasing the activity of these substances can calm down pain sensations, particularly when these are from nerve-related causes (neuropathic pain).

Duloxetine is also used to treat depression, generalised anxiety disorder and female stress urinary incontinence. Duloxetine is not addictive.

What are the benefits of Duloxetine?

The benefits of taking duloxetine to manage pain are that it can:

- ease long-term (chronic) nerve (neuropathic) pain such as burning, tingling, shooting, pins and needles and 'strange' sensations
- improve your sleep
- improve your mood

Unlike some other painkillers, Duloxetine will only work if taken regularly and not on a 'when needed' basis. Duloxetine may not begin to provide pain relief until 2 – 3 weeks after it has been started and may take around 4 - 6 weeks for full benefit, so you need to be patient.

What are the risks of Duloxetine?

There is a risk that you may not find Duloxetine beneficial for your pain. There is also a risk you may experience some of the side effects of Duloxetine. Everyone responds differently to medication and only the most common side effects are listed below; for a full list of the possible side effects, please read the information leaflet provided by the manufacturer that comes with the medication.

If the side effects are intolerable please stop this medication and seek further advice from your GP. Side effects of Duloxetine include:

- **Nausea (feeling sick)** - this tends to settle with time and can be improved by taking the medication with food.
- **Drowsiness** - if you experience drowsiness take your Duloxetine at night to improve your sleep.

- **Dizziness**
- **Headache**
- **Dry mouth** - if you experience this try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking pieces of ice or sugar-free sweets.

What are the risks of not taking Duloxetine?

The only risk of not taking Duloxetine is that you won't experience the benefits it can give.

What are the alternative treatments?

There are a variety of other medications that can be used for nerve pain if Duloxetine is not successful or you do not wish to use it. For information about suitable alternative medications please speak to your doctor.

Before taking Duloxetine

Before taking this medication please let your doctor or nurse know if you have any heart problems, uncontrolled blood pressure, raised intra-ocular pressure or a susceptibility to angle-closure glaucoma, a history of seizures or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding as this medication may not be suitable for you. You should also inform them of any other medications, including herbal remedies, you are taking.

Please make sure you read the manufacturer's information leaflet that comes with your Duloxetine before taking it.

How to take Duloxetine

It is best to take Duloxetine at night and swallow it whole – do not open, break or chew the capsule. Duloxetine can be taken with or without food but some people find that taking it with food can help to reduce any initial nausea that may occur.

How much Duloxetine should I take?

Most people are prescribed one tablet of Duloxetine per day to start with. If necessary you may be advised to increase this dose after a few weeks. Do not take a higher dose than you have been prescribed.

If you forget to take a dose one evening do not worry, skip the missed dose and then continue with your normal daily dose as usual.

You will be given an initial 4 week prescription and we will write to your GP so that they can continue prescribing Duloxetine if it suits you, so make sure you get an appointment with them before your medication runs out.

Precautions

Please make sure all health professionals seeing you are aware of any medication that you take, including herbal remedies.

Make sure all medications are stored safely and out of sight of children.

Check the expiry date of your medication before using it.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Pain Management Services on:

0121 507 4866

Monday – Friday, 9am - 4pm

If you have any problems outside these times, or are experiencing severe side effects, please contact your GP.

Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk or follow us on X @SWBHnhs.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

British national Formulary (BNF). (2022). *Duloxetine*. [Online] Available at: <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drugs/duloxetine/> (Accessed 11 April 2025).

Lunn MPT, Hughes RAC, Wiffen PJ. Duloxetine for treating painful neuropathy, chronic pain or fibromyalgia. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2014, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD007115. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007115.pub3. Accessed 11 April 2025.

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