

Patient Information Leaflet

Duloxetine for Chronic Pain Relief

Produced By: Chronic Pain Service

April 2014
Review due April 2017



If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.

Duloxetine (*Cymbalta*) is a medicine used to relieve chronic pain and treat low mood. It is often helpful for nerve-related pain or pain sensitivity (also called *central sensitisation*). It has a different way of relieving pain than standard pain killers and is often prescribed in combination.

If used for pain other than diabetes-related neuropathic pain it is formally used outside its product license as per individual decision by your pain specialist/doctor.

As it affects the central nervous system in complex ways, the effect often takes a while to be felt and requires *regular intake*. We recommend a trial of at least four weeks to judge the effect. If good, it should be taken on a regular long-term basis; if there is no distinct relief it should be discontinued after the trial period.

If you suffer with seizures/epilepsy, glaucoma and poorly controlled high blood pressure, Duloxetine should be used with caution and at a lower dose (up to 60mg per day). The most common side effect is drowsiness/dizziness therefore it is best time to take it in the evening. There are many other possible side effects, but most are uncommon, rare or very rare (please take a look at the product leaflet)

We suggest that you avoid driving for at least 2 days after starting or increasing the dose of this medication. If you work or otherwise need to be focused during the week, it might be a good idea to start the first dose on a Friday night.

To minimise initial side effects, we recommend starting with a low dose of 30mg every night. This can gradually be increased to 60mg and 90mg taken in one dose at night, depending on effect and side effects. If well tolerated and if there are no specific instructions from your doctor please increase from 30 to 60mg per day after one week.

Interactions

High doses of Duloxetine (90mg per day or more) combined with Tramadol, Amitriptyline, Nortriptyline, Trazodone or other anti-depressants can cause more side effects, usually drowsiness. Very rarely, combinations of the above drugs can cause a Serotonin-Syndrome. Early signs of this would be muscle jerks, newly started shaking or muscle rigidity which can lead on to fever, confusion, agitation.

Should you take Duloxetine together with any of the above medicines you should be aware of these early warning signs; we recommend to avoid high doses (e.g. Duloxetine should be limited to 60mg daily, Tramadol to 200-300mg daily and Ami-/Nortriptyline to less than 50mg daily). Many patients will tolerate a combination of higher doses, but this should be monitored with the above warning signs in mind.

How to take:

Duloxetine (*Cymbalta*)

	Evening dose
First week	30mg
Second week	60mg
<i>If well tolerated and better: continue with this dose.</i>	
<i>If your pain is still bad, increase further:</i>	
Third week	90mg

Duloxetine is not addictive; it has been prescribed it for pain relief and not depression. See your GP for tablets of suitable strength after changing the dose (e.g. 30mg/60mg/90mg tablets).

How to continue after the trial

If effective and well tolerated you should continue to take it regularly as agreed with your doctor. It should be continued principally as long as there is a useful (pain relieving) effect and no strong side effects. This medicine is meant for long-term use.

If you end up taking it for longer we recommend that you try to halve the dose for 3-4 days once or twice a year during periods when your pain is relatively well controlled. Carefully observe whether your pain worsens as a result. If so, please return to your previous dose. If the pain is no different with the reduced dose, then continue to slowly wean off as the medicine is either not needed or not effective any more. Please make your GP or Pain Specialist aware of this.

Prescriptions - how to get your medicine

In only exceptional cases will pain killers be prescribed directly in clinic by a pain specialist. The agreed shared care arrangement is that your GP prescribes drugs taking into account specialist recommendations.

To get your prescription you need to make an appointment with your GP ca 1-3 weeks after your pain clinic consultation or when you receive a copy of the clinic letter.

Also remember to see your GP in time for repeat prescriptions to avoid running out of drugs.

If the drug doesn't help or you struggle with side effects please do not wait for your next pain clinic review (this will often be several months later). The pain clinic letter usually lists several alternatives; to avoid delays you need to make a further appointment with your GP to discuss lack of effect or side effect and get a prescription for replacement drug or advice.

Take a proactive approach and request reviews - don't wait until appointments are made for you.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at enquires@cqc.org.uk

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

Ref: **A/Dulox/2**