

## Duloxetine

Duloxetine is a medicine that was originally developed for treatment of depression, and consequently found to have a beneficial effect on some types of pain. It is thought to work by increasing the activity of serotonin and noradrenaline, 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. (similar to rubbing yourself after an injury).

Duloxetine is also used to treat depression, generalised anxiety disorder and female stress urinary incontinence.

### **What are the benefits of taking duloxetine?**

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

- Ease long term nerve pain such as burning, tingling, shooting, pins and needles and 'strange' sensations
- Improve your sleep
- Improve your mood

### ***How do I take Duloxetine?***

Most people are prescribed duloxetine 60mg per day (1 capsule). It is best to take it at night and swallow it whole – do not open, break or chew the capsule. Duloxetine may be taken with or without food, but some people find that taking it with food can help to reduce any initial nausea (sickness) that may occur.

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

### ***What do I do if I get side effects?***

All drugs have side effects, but they do not happen in all the people who take them. The most common side effects of duloxetine are:

- Nausea (feeling sick) – this tends to settle with time and can be improved by taking the medicine with food
- Drowsiness – if you experience drowsiness, take your medicine at night to improve your sleep
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth– if you experience this, try chewing sugar free gum or sucking sugar free sweets, drink more non-alcoholic drinks
- Headache

A common side effect of duloxetine is drowsiness. If you are drowsy you should not drive or operate machinery.

Drinking alcohol may make you more drowsy, restrict alcohol intake to 1-2 units per day (1 unit=1/2 pint beer or lager, small glass wine or measure of spirit)

***Can I stop duloxetine suddenly?*** You can stop taking this medicine if you wish, however stopping abruptly may make you unwell. We recommend that you slowly reduce the dose over 1-2 weeks; should you feel unwell, consult your doctor.

***How long will I have to take duloxetine for?***

If the duloxetine is helpful, you will be asked to continue with it for up to six months. Your treatment will be reviewed by either the pain clinic or your GP. Duloxetine will be prescribed on a trial basis. Unless there is good reason to continue, treatment will be stopped after this time due to the risks associated with long term use of this medicine. There is no possibility of you becoming addicted to it. It is also important that you continue to take your other regular painkillers, unless you have been advised to stop taking these by your doctor.

***Is it safe for me to take other medicines whilst I'm receiving treatment with duloxetine?***

Before you take or buy any new medicines, including herbal remedies, tell your doctor or pharmacist that you are taking duloxetine and ask their advice.

***Can I drink alcohol whilst taking duloxetine?***

Drinking alcohol may make you more drowsy, restrict alcohol intake to 1-2 units per day (1 unit=1/2 pint beer or lager, small glass wine or measure of spirit). Consider avoiding alcohol if drowsiness is a particular issue for you.

***Is it safe for me to drive whilst I'm taking duloxetine?***

A common side effect of duloxetine is drowsiness. If you are drowsy you should not drive or operate machinery.

**Remember:**

Never give your prescribed tablets to other people as they may not be safe for them to take. Any leftover tablets should be taken to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.

**Keep all medicines out of reach of children**