

PATIENT INFORMATION

Amitriptyline in Headache

What is Amitriptyline?

Amitriptyline has been used in medical practice for over 30 years. It was initially introduced as an antidepressant but is also very effective as a pain reliever at lower doses. It is used for migraines and other headaches as well as other pain conditions such as back pain and irritable bowel syndrome.

What are its side effects?

You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine

The main side effects of Amitriptyline are drowsiness, constipation and dry mouth. The drowsiness usually resolves with time. You should be cautious if you are driving or operating machinery. You should discuss taking Amitriptyline with your doctor if you have heart disease, epilepsy or glaucoma.

How should I take it?

Amitriptyline should be taken at night-time starting with a dose of 10mg. This can then be increased after 7 - 14 nights up to 20mg (two tablets). Then it can be increased further, if necessary, by an extra 10mg every 7 - 14 nights up to the lowest effective dose. We would suggest going up to an initial maximum of 20 or 30 mg, but the dose can be increased a little further up to 40 mg or even 50mg at night if necessary and tolerated.

What do I do if I get side effects?

Side effects usually reduce with time. If you do get side effects, you should reduce back to the dose level where there were no side effects for 2 weeks before attempting to raise the dose again. If you get side effects with the 10mg dose, you can start with half or a quarter of a tablet before building up slowly.

(You can buy a useful tablet cutter from your pharmacist).

How long do I need to be on the tablets for?

Your tablets may not start working for at least 6-8 weeks but you should continue to take them for this length of time. A minimum length of time to be on the tablets is for at least 3 months. You should talk to your doctor before stopping this medication.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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