

PATIENT INFORMATION

Nortriptyline for Migraine and Headaches

What is Nortriptyline?

Nortriptyline has been used in medical practice for many years. It was initially introduced as an antidepressant but is also very effective as a pain reliever. 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 Nortriptyline are constipation, dry mouth and drowsiness. The drowsiness usually resolves with time and is generally less severe than with the similar medication Amitriptyline, however, you should be cautious if you are driving or operating machinery, particularly when you first start taking it.

You should discuss taking Nortriptyline with your doctor if you have heart disease, epilepsy or glaucoma. Additionally, there is not enough data to show if it is safe to take in pregnancy so it is not recommended if you are pregnant or breast feeding.

How should I take it?

Nortriptyline 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 unless you are suffering with side effects. 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.