

Patient information

Amiodarone

Pharmacy and Cardiology Department

This leaflet has been produced to give general information about your amiodarone treatment. If you have any questions that are not answered in this leaflet, please discuss this with a member of your healthcare team.

What is amiodarone and why have I been started on it?

Amiodarone belongs to a group of drugs called anti-arrhythmics and is used to treat serious heart conditions in which your heart beats unevenly or too fast. It works by slowing down the electrical signals sent through your heart, regulating how your heart beats.

How should I take my amiodarone?

At the beginning of treatment, you will likely take your amiodarone three times a day for one week, then twice a day for another week, and then reduce to and continue to take once daily. Depending on when you go home you may be at the beginning, middle or end of this course so it is vital you follow the information on the box label and discharge letter.

Amiodarone is not always needed long-term; discuss with your doctor how long you should be taking it for.

Do not stop taking amiodarone without talking to a doctor as this could be dangerous.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, do not take the one you missed and continue to take the next dose at the usual time. **Do not double the next dose.**

Other medicines

The way your body processes medication can be affected by amiodarone, and this can continue for several months after stopping amiodarone. Therefore, it is important that you check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any other medicines, including ones that you buy.

Food and alcohol

You must not drink grapefruit juice whilst on amiodarone as it can increase the chance of you experiencing side effects.

Limit your alcohol intake as this can increase the risk of liver related side effects.

What are the side effects of amiodarone?

Like many drugs amiodarone can cause side effects, most of these are mild and should resolve on their own like; nausea, altered taste and diarrhoea.

There are some more serious side effects that you should be aware of. You will have a blood test every six months to monitor the health of your liver and thyroid gland and to see how well your kidneys are working. Your GP surgery should arrange these for you, if you haven't been contacted within six months since your last blood test make sure you get in touch. As amiodarone stays in your body for a long time, you will need to continue to have tests for a year after you stop the medicine.

Skin: Amiodarone can cause your skin to become more sensitive to sunlight, causing tingling and blisters. Avoid prolonged periods in the sun, cover up and wear a high factor sunscreen. Precautions should be continued for several months after stopping.

Eyes: Amiodarone commonly causes deposits to form in the front of your eye, most people will not notice these, others may notice a halo around their vision or a dazzling effect from car headlights. If you are affected discuss this with your optician/GP. Most of the time this will resolve when the drug is stopped. The manufacturer advises yearly eye tests whilst taking amiodarone.

Thyroid: Amiodarone can cause your thyroid gland to produce less hormone than it usually does, which can cause weight gain and tiredness. It can also produce too much which can lead to reduced weight, fast heart rate, sweating feeling shaky. If you notice any of these, contact your GP. You will have this checked with a blood test every six months whilst taking the drug.

Lungs: Amiodarone can cause damage to the lungs, which is usually reversible if detected early. Before you are started on the drug you will have a chest X-ray to make sure your lungs are healthy. If you develop a cough, breathlessness or high temperature that doesn't clear, contact your GP as soon as possible.

Liver: Amiodarone can affect your liver, often your liver function tests may be raised compared to what they were before starting the drug and most of the time this causes no issues or symptoms. Rarely, this can be more serious and cause liver damage. If you notice jaundice (yellowing of the skin and/or eyes), light coloured stool, sudden abdominal pain then contact your GP immediately. You will have blood test every six months to check the condition of your liver.

Heart: If you notice your heart beating more slowly than usual, are feeling dizzy or faint, then you may have too much amiodarone in your body. Contact your GP straight away.

This leaflet is not a substitute for any advice that your doctor, nurse or pharmacist may give you.

You can get more detailed information from the manufacturer's information leaflet.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

Aintree Hospital Medicines Information Hotline

Tel: 0151 529 3208

Available Monday to Friday 8.30am -5pm (excluding bank holidays)

Alternatively, you can contact NHS 111 Service out of hours on

Tel: 111.

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