

## Patient information

### Disulfiram

#### Digestive Diseases Care Group

You have been prescribed the medicine Disulfiram sometimes known as Antabuse®. This medicine has been prescribed for you.

**Do not pass it on to others. It may harm them, even if their symptoms are the same as yours.**

This medicine is usually a tablet and should be swallowed with water.

**Read this entire leaflet carefully before you start taking this medicine.**

#### **What Disulfiram is and what it is used for?**

Disulfiram is used as a supportive agent in the treatment of alcoholism. When you drink alcohol it is changed in the body into acetaldehyde, disulfiram blocks the enzyme which breaks down acetaldehyde. This leads to an increased level of acetaldehyde in the blood causing unpleasant physical reactions. If you drink alcohol you will experience unpleasant physical reactions called "Disulfiram- alcohol reaction"

#### **How do I recognise a Disulfiram- alcohol reaction?**

- flushing of the face and neck
- increased body temperature
- sweating
- feeling or being sick
- itchy skin or rash caused by an allergic reaction (pruritis, urticaria)
- anxiety
- dizziness
- headache
- blurred vision
- difficulty breathing
- palpitations
- rapid breathing.

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

This medicine helps you totally avoid drinking alcohol and as such achieve your agreed treatment goal.

## **Are there any alternative treatments available?**

There are no other medicines available that have this effect with Alcohol. There are some medicines that help you stop drinking by reducing cravings and your nurse or doctor can discuss this with you.

## **What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?**

There is an increased risk of you returning to drinking alcohol.

## **What to do if something goes wrong?**

If you or your carer/relative think you may have had a seizure (sometimes called a fit) or a blackout), or if you have difficulty breathing, or chest pain you should **call 999** for an ambulance to take you to hospital.

The disulfiram-alcohol reaction can occur within 15 minutes after drinking alcohol and may last several hours.

## **Taking other medicines**

Please tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking or have recently taken any other medicines, including medicines obtained without a prescription.

### **Especially:**

- warfarin (reduces blood clotting)
- phenytoin and paraldehyde (to treat epilepsy)
- theophylline (to treat asthma)
- chlordiazepoxide and diazepam (to treat anxiety)
- pethidine and morphine (painkillers)
- amphetamines (stimulants)
- pimozide, and chlorpromazine (to treat mental illnesses)
- isoniazid metronidazole, rifampicin (to treat infections)
- amitriptyline (to treat depression).

## **Other precautions**

Certain foods, liquid medicines, remedies, tonics, toiletries, perfumes and sprays may contain enough alcohol to cause a disulfiram-alcohol reaction. Caution should also be exercised with low alcohol and “nonalcoholic” or “alcohol-free” beers and wines; if enough is taken they may produce unpleasant reactions.

## Driving and using machines

Disulfiram tablets may cause drowsiness or tiredness. If you are affected do not drive or operate machinery.

## How to take Disulfiram

It is important that you have not drunk alcohol for at least 24 hours before taking the first dose. Swallow the tablets with water.

**Your nurse or doctor will describe how to take your tablets; the table below is a guide.**

Initiation Regime	Dose	
Day One	800 mgs	Four tablets
Day Two	600 mgs	Three tablets
Day Three	400 mgs	Two tablets
Day Four	200 mgs	One tablet
Day Five	200 mgs	One tablet
Day Six	As directed	As directed

## If you take more Disulfiram than you should

If you (or someone else, especially a child) swallow a lot of tablets at the same time, contact your nearest hospital casualty department immediately. Signs of an overdose include; feeling or being sick, stomach pain, diarrhea, drowsiness, mental disorders, tiredness, rapid heartbeat, rapid breathing, high body temperature, low blood pressure, loss of muscle control, high blood sugar, changes in the blood (as seen in blood tests). Severe cases may result in coma, fits or death.

## If you forget to take the tablets

If you forget to take a dose, and you do not remember it within 12 hours, you should not take it. Do not take two doses the next time.

## Possible side effects

Like all medicines, Disulfiram tablets can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. Tell your doctor or nurse if you notice any of the following side effects or notice any other effects not listed:

- depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, mania
- decreased sexual desire
- drowsiness and fatigue (especially at start of treatment)
- damage of nerves (causing pain and loss of sensation in hands and feet)
- encephalopathy (brain disease)
- feeling or being sick, or bad breath
- inflammation of the liver (hepatitis), damage to liver cells, liver failure
- allergic skin reactions such as itching and redness.

If you notice any side effects, they get worse, or if you notice any not listed, please report this to your doctor or nurse.

**If you need further information or are worried about any aspect of your care that is not urgent, please do not hesitate to contact the Alcohol Care Team on Tel: 0151 706 3283.**

## **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**

### **Alcohol Care Team**

**Tel: 0151 706 3283**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3283**

### **Dr Lynn Owens:**

**Tel: 0151 706 4776**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 4776**

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