

## Patient information

### Nortriptyline for chronic facial pain

Liverpool University Dental Hospital

**This leaflet aims to answer your questions about taking Nortriptyline to treat your chronic facial pain. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

#### What is Nortriptyline?

Nortriptyline is a drug which belongs to a group of medicines called tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs). Nortriptyline is widely used to treat depression but, at lower doses, medical studies have proven that nortriptyline can treat pain. It is usually only prescribed if other medicines have caused significant drowsiness. Nortriptyline is only available on prescription.

#### Taking an unlicensed medicine

The use of nortriptyline for treating some types of chronic facial pain is unlicensed, which means that the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way. However, there is evidence that it works to treat these.

#### How do I take the medicine?

It's normal to take nortriptyline once a day. It is best to take it before bedtime because it can make you feel sleepy. If you find that you are still feeling drowsy in the morning you could try taking it earlier in the evening. You can take it with or without food. Swallow the tablet with a drink of water.

You may notice a difference after a week or two but it can take up to six weeks for nortriptyline to work as a painkiller.

#### How much will I take?

The maximum dose of nortriptyline for treating pain is 75mg a day.

Week	Dose
1	10mg
2	20mg
3	30mg
4	40mg
5 onwards	50mg

## **What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?**

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, unless it's within 12 hours of your next dose. In this case, just leave out the missed dose and take your next dose as normal. If nortriptyline makes you sleepy and you need to drive or use tools or machinery, leave out the missed dose and carry on with the next dose as normal.

**Never take two doses at the same time. Never take an extra dose to make up for a forgotten one.** If you often forget doses, it may help to set an alarm to remind you. You could also ask your pharmacist for advice on other ways to help you remember to take your medicine.

## **Are there any side effects?**

Like all medicines, nortriptyline can cause side effects in some people, but many people have no side effects or only minor ones. Some of the common side effects gradually improve as your body gets used to it. Nortriptyline can cause extra side effects if you stop taking it suddenly.

## **Common side effects**

Because the dose of nortriptyline for pain is lower than the dose for depression, the common side effects tend to be milder and go away within a few days.

Keep taking the medicine but talk to your doctor or pharmacist if these side effects bother you or don't go away:

- constipation
- dizziness
- dry mouth
- feeling sleepy
- difficulty peeing
- headache.

## **Serious side effects**

It happens rarely, but some people have a serious side effect after taking nortriptyline. Call your GP or attend the Emergency Department (A&E) straight away if you get:

- a fast or irregular heartbeat
- yellow skin, or the whites of your eyes go yellow (these can be signs of a liver problem),
- a headache, feel confused or weak, get muscle cramps or a seizure (these can be signs of a low sodium level in your blood)
- thoughts about harming yourself or ending your life

- eye pain, a change in your eyesight, swelling or redness in or around the eye
- severe constipation or you're unable to pee and it's causing severe tummy pain
- weakness on one side of your body, trouble speaking or thinking, loss of balance or blurred vision (these can be signs of a stroke).

### **Serious allergic reaction**

In rare cases, it is possible to have a serious allergic reaction to nortriptyline. Contact your GP or go to the Emergency Department straight away if:

- you get a skin rash that may include itchy, red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin
- you're wheezing, you get tightness in the chest or throat
- you have trouble breathing or talking
- your mouth, face, lips, tongue or throat start swelling.

These are not all the side effects of nortriptyline. For a full list see the leaflet inside your medicine packet. You can report any suspected side effect to the UK safety scheme at, w: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>.

### **Is there anything else I need to know?**

Nortriptyline is generally not recommended in pregnancy or while breastfeeding. Your doctor will only prescribe nortriptyline for your pain while you're pregnant or breastfeeding if the benefits of taking the medicine outweigh the risks.

Lots of medicines and nortriptyline can interfere with each other and increase the chances of side effects. Make sure that your doctor and pharmacist know you're taking nortriptyline before starting or stopping any other medicine.

Do not take St John's wort, the herbal remedy for depression, while you are being treated with nortriptyline. It may increase your risk of side effects.

### **How do I get a repeat prescription?**

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for nortriptyline, which you can take to your local pharmacy. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early enough so that you don't run out or risk missing any doses of your medication.

Useful sources of information

NHS website, w: [www.nhs.uk/medicines/nortriptyline-for-pain/](http://www.nhs.uk/medicines/nortriptyline-for-pain/)

For further information about the potential risks and side effects, please read the information leaflet supplied by the manufacturer within the box. Alternatively, please contact the Oral Medicine Department. The department is open Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

## **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**

### **Oral Medicine Department**

**The department is open Monday to Friday**

**9.00 am to 5.00 pm.**

**Tel: 0151 706 5060**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 5060**

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