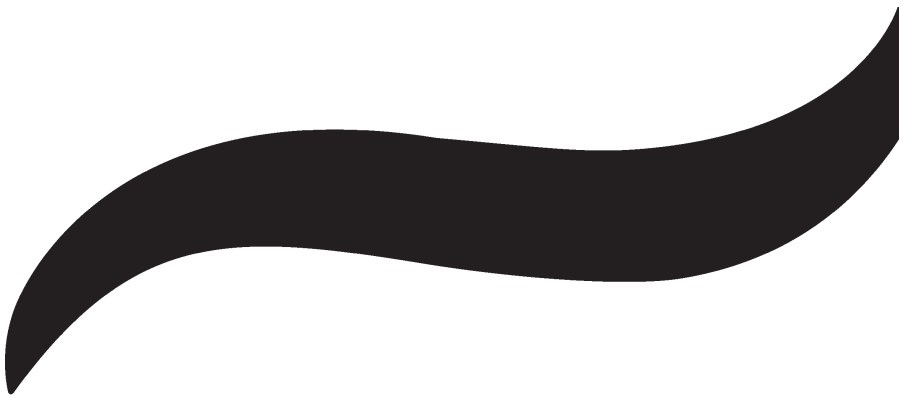




Tramadol

Information for patients
Prescribing Management Team
Kirklands Hospital



WHAT IS TRAMADOL?

Tramadol belongs to the group of medicines called opioids. Others include morphine, codeine and dihydrocodeine. Tramadol is used to help manage moderate to severe pain.

Tramadol works by changing the way the body senses pain and can then give pain relief. It can be used to treat different types of pain. Tramadol gives the best pain relief if used with regular paracetamol.

WHAT DOSE SHOULD I TAKE?

Tramadol comes as 50mg capsules. The usual dose is 1-2 capsules up to four times a day. The maximum daily dose of tramadol is 400mg. Doses of tramadol vary depending on your pain, response and side effects. **Do not take more than your prescribed dose.**

You can take your full dose of tramadol when your pain is at its worst. You can then reduce your dose when it improves. This stops your body 'getting used' to the medicine (also known as tolerance).

Occasionally tramadol may be prescribed as the modified release (m/r) version, to be taken once or twice a day. For example m/r may be tried for people who are wakened by their pain. Ordinary release capsules are still used during the daytime, so the dose can be changed depending on your pain. You should not take more than 400mg daily if you take both m/r and ordinary tramadol.

ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

All medicines can cause side effects but not everyone will get them. A full list is in the patient information sheet with your prescription.

Common side effects include feeling sick, constipation, dizziness, sleepiness and sickness. Less common side effects include itching, sweating, dry mouth, diarrhoea or rash.

If tramadol makes you feel drowsy you should avoid driving or operating machinery. It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle whilst unsafe due to medicine use. Alcohol may make the sleepiness worse and should be avoided where possible.

Some side effects can be reduced by slowly building the dose. Others may pass after the first few doses. If side effects become a problem, or you experience symptoms you think might be due to the medication, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

HOW LONG SHOULD I TAKE TRAMADOL FOR?

In general, you will need to take them as long as you are requiring pain relief for moderate to severe pain.

If tramadol has been taken for a long time it may not work as well or may no longer be needed.

If you, your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist think this is happening, they may ask you to reduce the dose slowly to check this.

CAN I BECOME ADDICTED TO TRAMADOL?

There is a risk that you may become addicted to, or dependent on this medication (a need to keep taking the medicine). If you take tramadol for a long time, you can become used to the effects and you may need to take higher doses to control your pain.

You should not suddenly stop taking these tablets unless your doctor tells you to. If you want to stop taking your tablets, discuss this with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist first. This needs to be a gradual and controlled process.

HOW YOU COULD BEGIN TO REDUCE YOUR TRAMADOL

Do not stop tramadol suddenly if you have been taking it for a long time; this may cause withdrawal symptoms such as agitation, anxiety, palpitations, shaking and sweating. Reducing the dose slowly will help stop this happening.

It is important to choose the right time to begin reducing your medicine. This should be when you do not have stresses in your life and when your pain is stable.

After discussions with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist, you could try reducing your total daily dose by one 50mg capsule a month.

- ❖ If you take tramadol 50mg two capsules four times a day –
try reducing to tramadol 50mg capsules
 - ◆ two in the morning
 - ◆ two at lunchtime
 - ◆ one at teatime
 - ◆ two at night

- ❖ If you take tramadol 50mg one capsule four times a day - try reducing to tramadol 50mg one capsule three times a day.

Only you know when your pain tends to be worse. It would be best to reduce the first dose at the time of day when your pain is at its best.

If there are no problems then continue reducing slowly by one tramadol 50mg capsule every month. You can reduce more slowly than this too if needed.

MEDICINE IN CHRONIC PAIN

The benefit you get from taking medicine should always be more than any side-effects you may experience. Only you

- ❖ know how bad your pain is
- ❖ are able to say if your medicine is helping
- ❖ know what side effects you are having

Getting the best effect from your medication may be a matter of trial and error. It may help to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms. Side effects often reduce after you have been on a medicine for a few days. It may be several days or weeks before you notice that a new medicine is making a difference.

Please read the patient information sheet given with each medication. It will give you more information about the medicine and any side effects.

You can discuss your pain medication with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist. They can:

- ❖ give you advice on which pain medicines may help
- ❖ help you find the best way to take your medicines
- ❖ advise you on putting your dose up safely if your pain is worse and on taking less medication safely when your pain is less

If your medicine is not helping you may not need to take it. Please talk to your doctor or pharmacist before stopping as some pain medicines should not be stopped suddenly.

Do not share or take other peoples medication. Always advise your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist about any other medication or products you are taking for chronic pain, including things bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or non-prescribed medicines.

Understanding how your medications work will help you to get the best pain relief with the least side-effects.

We hope you found this information leaflet helpful. This information is not intended to replace your Doctor's advice. If you have any comments about the content, please let us know. This can be done by filling in the comment section, and sending it to the Prescribing Management Team at the address listed below, or by email.

Prescribing Management Team
Kirklands Hospital
Fallside Road
Bothwell
G71 8BB

prescribing@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

This publication is adapted with the kind agreement of NHS Fife Pain Management Service and approved for use in NHS Lanarkshire

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