

What is duloxetine?

Duloxetine belongs to the group of medications called antidepressants. These medicines are also useful for neuropathic (nerve) pain.

Nerve pain is a type of pain that follows after damage to a nerve. It is thought to result from a “rewiring” of the nerves of the spinal cord. They are too sensitive and send too many pain signals. Normal touch can feel painful. There is often a “burning” or “shooting” feeling, or pins and needles. The pain can be there all the time or can come and go.

You have not been given this medication to treat depression. If you, your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist thinks you have depression this should be discussed separately.

What dose should I take?

Duloxetine is available as 30mg and 60mg capsules. Your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist will tell you what dose to take.

A usual starting dose would be 30mg or 60mg daily. It can take a few weeks to begin to help your pain. The maximum dose is 120mg a day.

You should take this medication regularly. At the same time each day. It should be swallowed whole with a glass of water.

How long should I take duloxetine for?

This is different for different people. In general, it will have to be taken for as long as you are requiring relief for nerve pain. This should be reviewed regularly every 3-6 months. Sometimes when duloxetine has been taken for a long time it may not work as well. If you, your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist think this is happening they may reduce the dose slowly to see if you still need it.

Do not stop duloxetine suddenly if you have been taking it for a long time as this may cause withdrawal symptoms. Reducing the dose slowly will help stop this happening.

Are there any side effects?

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

Some side effects can be reduced by slowly building up the dose. Others may pass after the first few doses. If side effects go on and become a problem or you have others not expected then speak to your doctor, pain specialist or pharmacist.

Common side effects are feeling sick, headache, dry mouth, sleepiness and dizziness.

If duloxetine makes you feel drowsy you should avoid driving or operating machinery. It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle whilst unsafe due to medication use. This might be worse when you start the medication and each time your dose goes up. Alcohol may make the sleepiness worse and should be avoided where possible.

Less common side effects include loss of appetite, flushes, raised blood pressure, sleeping problems, feeling anxious or sweating.

If you experience an allergic reaction, eye problems, or suicidal thoughts, let your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist know.

Interaction with other medications

Duloxetine can cause more side effects, such as sweating, feeling sick or restless, when taken with other medications. These include tramadol, St John's Wort or other antidepressants. This reaction only happens rarely. Let your doctor pharmacist or pain specialist know if you think this is happening to you.

Medication in chronic pain

The benefit from taking medication should always be more than any side effects you may have. Only **you**

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

It may take a few weeks or several trials of different medications to find the best combination for you and your pain. It may help to keep a diary of your pain and other symptoms. Side effects often become less once you have been on a medicine for a few days.

Please read the patient information sheet given with each medication. It gives 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. They can help you find the best way to take your medicines. They can 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, pharmacist or pain specialist first. 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. This includes anything bought from the pharmacy, herbal supplements or non- prescribed medicines.

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

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Patient Information Leaflet



GETTING YOU ON TRACK TO RECOVERY

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NHS Fife SMS text service number 07805800005 is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment.

To find out more about accessible formats contact:
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