

Amiodarone Patient Information Leaflet



Why am I taking amiodarone?

Your doctor has prescribed you amiodarone to help manage your heart rhythm. Amiodarone is a very useful medication and will only have been commenced in your best interest.

This leaflet contains important information that you should know if you are taking amiodarone.

Common side effects - these affect around 1 in 10 people who take this medicine

Skin: Amiodarone makes the skin more sensitive to sun light. Exposure to the sun may cause: redness, and skin discolouration. You should avoid prolonged episodes of sun exposure. If you are going outdoors for a long period, you should cover your arms, legs and should wear a hat, and apply sun block of at least factor 30 to exposed areas including hands. Because amiodarone remains in the body for a long time it may be necessary to continue using sun block for a few months after stopping amiodarone.

Blurred Vision: Small deposits can form in the cornea of the eye (the clear surface that covers the pupil, iris and white of the eye). These deposits are not harmful. You may, however, notice the effect of these eye deposits if looking at bright lights at night time e.g. when driving a car. Of people taking amiodarone one in ten will notice a bluish halo around their vision. Again this is not harmful. Please ensure that you report any visual symptoms to your optometrist (optician), mention to them that you are prescribed amiodarone and attend annual eye check-ups.

Thyroid: Amiodarone contains iodine and can cause disorders of thyroid function; both over active (this occurs in about 5% of people taking amiodarone) and under active (this occurs in about 20% of people taking amiodarone). Both overactive and under-active thyroid can easily be treated with medications. Blood samples will be taken by your general practitioner (GP) at 6 months, then (if normal) every 12 months for at least 12 months following discontinuation of amiodarone. However, if your blood test suggests some changes then a further blood sample will be repeated in 3 months. Therefore, it is important if you feel either extremely tired and weak, or extremely restless and agitated – speak to your GP.

Other:

- Pins and needles in your hands and feet
- Slow pulse

Rarely occurring side effects:

- A new unexplained cough or shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Weight loss or fever
- Yellowing of the skin or the whites of your eyes
- Abdominal pain
- Severe skin rash

Lungs: Amiodarone can cause problems with thickening (fibrosis) of some of the structures of the lungs (1 in a 1000 people). If you feel you have developed unexplained shortness of breath or a new non-productive cough you should arrange to see your GP straight away. You may be referred to Respiratory for further investigations.

Liver: Amiodarone can rarely cause problems with the function of the liver. However, if this happens it may be improved by reducing the dose or stopping your amiodarone. Blood samples will be taken every 6 months by your GP to assess liver function.

If you experience any of the above rare symptoms contact your GP straight away. They will arrange for you to have further investigations carried out.

Does anything affect amiodarone?

Some medicines may interact with amiodarone and require the dose to be changed, i.e. simvastatin, digoxin, herbal remedies, and warfarin.

Warfarin levels require to be monitored more closely and regularly as INR (international normalised ratio) levels fluctuate. Grapefruit juice is not recommended as this may increase the amount of amiodarone in your bloodstream, making side effects more likely. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink while taking this medicine. This is because drinking alcohol while taking this medicine will increase the chance of you having problems with your liver.

Is there anything else I need to know?

The effects listed above, although not common do mean that monitoring is important. You will have a blood sample taken before commencing amiodarone and every 6 months to ensure that your thyroid and liver function are acceptable and that no other problems have developed.

You should not take amiodarone if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or thinking of becoming pregnant.

If you forget to take amiodarone Tablets

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember it. However, if it is nearly time for the next dose, skip the missed dose. Do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten tablet.

Always tell your pharmacist that you are taking amiodarone before buying over the counter medication or herbal remedies.

What if I have more questions about amiodarone?

If you need more advice or information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
You may also contact the Arrhythmia nurses on 01382 632193

If you have Atrial Fibrillation or atrial flutter you may find information regarding amiodarone on www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk

This leaflet is not supposed to replace the information provided by the makers of your medicine so please make sure you read the leaflet which comes in the box with your tablets.

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