

**Patient
Information**

Duloxetine for the treatment of vulvodynia

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about the medication duloxetine which you have been prescribed to reduce the pain of vulvodynia.

Vulvodynia is pain in the vulva (area around the outside of the vagina) that lasts at least 3 months but does not have a specific cause.

Why have I been prescribed this medication?

You have been prescribed duloxetine as it works by reducing the amount of pain messages sent to your brain.

Duloxetine can be used to treat persistent pain and is good for burning, shooting and stabbing nerve pain, and for pain that keeps you awake at night.

How does duloxetine work?

Duloxetine belongs to a group of medicines called serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs). It can also be used to treat depression.

You may start to notice an improvement in your pain within a week of taking duloxetine. However, it may take up to a month to get the full effect from this medication. The dose that you are prescribed may need to be increased to get the maximum effect for you.

How do I take duloxetine?

The starting duloxetine dose is 30mg, taken once a day. This may be increased up to 60mg a day after 8 weeks if your pain has not been relieved. The maximum daily dose is 120mg - this will be divided in to 2 doses (60mg twice a day).

Duloxetine should be taken at the same time every day. It can be taken in the morning or at night. Please be aware that this medication can make you feel drowsy.

Reference No.

GHP11881_01_25

Department

Pharmacy

Review due

January 2028

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If you are taking the medication once a day and are experiencing drowsiness, you should take the medication at night.

The capsules should be swallowed whole with a glass of water. You can take duloxetine with or without food.

It is important not to stop taking duloxetine suddenly. If you feel that the medication is not working for you it **must be** reduced gradually. You should discuss this with your GP. Otherwise, you may experience withdrawal symptoms such as, nausea and dizziness, vomiting, nightmares, irritability, anxiety, trouble sleeping and strange sensations like pins and needles in your hands and feet.

Possible side effects

Important:	Duloxetine can cause drowsiness. Do not drive or operate heavy machinery if you feel drowsy.
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Most side effects are mild and will go away after a few doses.

Common side effects include; headaches, drowsiness, nausea (feeling sick), dizziness, blurred vision and dry mouth. If you have these side effects and they are severe, contact your GP or pharmacist for advice.

Less common side effects include; decreased appetite, flushing, raised blood pressure, difficulty sleeping, feeling anxious, increased sweating. If you suffer any of these side effects, contact your GP or pharmacist for advice.

Alcohol will increase the sedative effects of duloxetine, so it is advisable that you do not drink alcohol when you start taking this medication. Once you are on a stable dose you may drink alcohol in moderation but it may make you more drowsy than normal.

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What if I forget to take a dose?

Take the dose as soon as you remember. However, if you only take one dose in the morning and you miss the dose, do not take the medication in the evening. Wait until the next morning and skip the missed dose. **Do not take 2 doses at the same time.**

Is duloxetine suitable for everyone?

Duloxetine is not suitable for everyone, please talk to your hospital doctor if you:

- are allergic to any medications.
- are taking any other prescribed medications or herbal medicines and this has not been discussed with the person who prescribed duloxetine.
- have epilepsy or glaucoma.
- are taking any medications that cause drowsiness (for example, strong pain relief such as morphine).
- are taking any medications that increase the level of serotonin (such as tramadol, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI) taken for depression.
- are pregnant or breastfeeding, or planning to become pregnant.
- are taking any anticoagulants, antiplatelets or other medications to thin the blood.
- have or have had a mental health problem.
- have kidney or liver problems.
- are taking an antidepressant medication.
- are taking ciprofloxacin, an antibiotic used to treat infections.

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Contact information

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Dermatology team via the secretary's below:

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Content reviewed: January 2025

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85