

a period of weeks. Your doctor will advise you on how and when to do this.

Does it matter what time of day I take the medication?

Amitriptyline will help you to go to sleep and is best taken in the evening between one and two hours before going to bed, to allow the sedative effect to work.

When would it not be safe to take amitriptyline?

You should always discuss any existing medical problems with your doctor before starting a new drug. Seek advice particularly if you have a history of heart, liver or mental health problems.

If you find that you become drowsy while taking amitriptyline you must avoid driving and operating machinery. Alcoholic drinks should also be avoided because they can cause excessive sleepiness when taken with amitriptyline.

If you have any queries, please contact the Chronic Pain Management nurse specialist on **01473 703435**.



Amitriptyline

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Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format

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Here are some of the questions that people often ask about this medication.

Why am I being prescribed an anti-depressant drug for pain?

Many drugs have more than one use. Amitriptyline is mainly used for treating depression but has been used for over 30 years to relieve nerve pain. It is licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for the treatment of depression but can be prescribed by your doctor for nerve pain.

Do you think that I'm depressed and that the pain is all in my mind?

No, your pain is real.

There are three uses for amitriptyline:

- in lower doses to help with nerve pain
- in lower doses to help with sleeping difficulties
- in higher doses, to lift depression.

You are being prescribed **amitriptyline** at a dose which **will help to alleviate your nerve pain.**

If your doctor thinks that you are depressed he will tell you and discuss any treatment with you first. Some people who have nerve pain are also depressed.

What sort of pain will amitriptyline help?

Mainly pain caused by nerves which are not working normally. Typically nerve pain may feel like a burning or shooting sensation, pins and needles, or numbness may also be experienced. Amitriptyline is also sedating so may help you to sleep better at night.

How does amitriptyline work on nerve pain?

The nervous system is made up of different types of nerves, the spinal cord and brain. A number of chemicals known as neurotransmitters are located within the nervous system. These chemicals are needed to conduct messages of sensation along the nerve fibres to the brain. Amitriptyline alters the way the nervous system reacts to neurotransmitters and produces pain relief.

What side effects might I experience?

The most common side effects are a dry mouth and sleepiness. Other less common symptoms include blurred vision, constipation, difficulty in passing urine, weight gain and problems with sexual function. Side effects usually settle down over time after starting the drug or after increasing the dose. It can also be a week or two before the pain-relieving effect starts so it is important to continue taking the tablets. However, if you are concerned about the side effects seek advice from your doctor.

How long will I have to take the drug?

When you start taking amitriptyline the dose may be low at first but may need to be increased. This will help to achieve the most effective dose for you. It is not a short-term pain-relieving medication, but needs to be taken for longer periods. It should be taken regularly, at the same time and dose every day and not be stopped suddenly. When the time comes for you to stop taking this drug you will need to reduce gradually over

