

## 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).

Sometimes tramadol may be prescribed as the modified release (m/r) version, 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. When taking both m/r and ordinary tramadol it is important not to take more than 400mg daily.

## 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 go on and become a problem, or you have others not expected, then speak to your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

Tramadol has the potential to cause tolerance, dependence and addiction. Although this is rare when prescribe for chronic pain. If you have concerns you can discuss this with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist.

## How long should I take tramadol for?

In general, they will have to be taken for as long as you are requiring pain relief for moderate to severe pain.

Sometimes 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, pain specialist or GP think this is happening they may ask you to reduce the dose slowly to check this.

## How you could begin to reduce your tramadol

Do not stop tramadol 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. You could try reducing your total daily dose by one 50mg capsule a week or discuss this with your doctor, pharmacist or pain specialist

- If you take tramadol 50mg two capsules four times a day Try reducing to tramadol 50mg capsules two in the morning, one and at lunchtime, two at teatime and 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

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

## Medicine in chronic pain

The benefit from taking medicine 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 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 and 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 or pharmacist 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 including things 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

NHS Fife provides accessible communication in a variety of formats including for people who are speakers of community languages, who require Easy Read versions, who speak BSL, read Braille or use Audio formats.

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:  
[fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net](mailto:fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net) or phone 01592 729130