



Tramadol - information for patients and carers

Tramadol is a pain reliever. You may be prescribed tramadol if you have moderate to severe pain, and other pain relievers have not worked.

**Tramadol should reduce pain and allow you to do more.
Tramadol should usually only be taken for a short period of time.
Even if it has helped you, tramadol is not a long-term treatment for pain.**

Only take tramadol if it has been prescribed for you by a healthcare professional.

Starting tramadol

- To see if tramadol is the right medicine for you, your prescriber will usually start a short trial of treatment (between 2 and 4 weeks). This will also lower the chance of you taking tramadol for longer than you need.
- Tramadol should only be continued if it reduces pain and helps you do more.

Stopping tramadol

- Pain relievers do not work for everyone. If you are still in pain, your dose of tramadol will be gradually reduced and then stopped to reduce the risk of harm from side effects.
- If you have been taking tramadol for a long time (more than 3 months), you should talk to your prescriber about whether tramadol is still helping you, or whether you should try to gradually stop taking it.
- If you are thinking about stopping tramadol treatment, **talk to your prescriber before you stop**. If you and your prescriber decide that stopping tramadol is right for you, your prescriber will reduce your dose of tramadol usually every one to two weeks, based on how you are feeling. Depending on the dose you are taking, stopping treatment could take several weeks, several months or longer.



- Stopping tramadol too quickly can cause withdrawal symptoms, particularly if you have been taking it for a long time. These may include:
 - flu-like symptoms
 - anxiety
 - insomnia
 - nightmares; and
 - feeling irritable.

**Taking too much tramadol can cause severe harm.
You must not take more than has been prescribed for you.
You must not lend or share your tramadol with anyone else.
If you have taken more than you should - call your pharmacy, call
NHS 111 Wales, or in an emergency call an ambulance - dial 999.**

Common side effects

- dizziness (which may lead to falling over, particularly in older people)
- sleepiness and tiredness
- headache
- constipation
- dry mouth
- nausea and vomiting (feeling and being sick)
- sweating

Because tramadol may make you feel sleepy or dizzy, it may affect your reactions and your ability to drive. **If you feel that your reactions are affected, do not drive a car or other vehicle, do not use electric tools or operate machinery.** It is against the law to drive if you are taking tramadol and it affects your driving.

Long-term effects

Taking tramadol for a long time may cause these additional problems:

- the effects starting to wear off (sometimes known as 'tolerance')
- withdrawal effects when you stop treatment, particularly if you stop suddenly
- addiction (the need to keep taking tramadol despite harmful effects).



Taking tramadol with other medicines

Some other medicines can affect the way tramadol works, and increase the chance of you having side effects. Drinking alcohol can increase the chance of you feeling drowsiness when taking tramadol.

Take extra care and speak to your prescriber or pharmacist if:

- you are taking medicine for depression
- you are taking medicines to help you sleep or with anxiety; for example, diazepam, lorazepam
- you are taking medicine for epilepsy
- you are taking warfarin
- you are taking other pain relievers
- you drink alcohol, or take recreational drugs
- you have kidney problems.

Caution

If you are pregnant, or breastfeeding, tramadol may not be suitable for you.

Tramadol may also not be suitable for children; older people; people with certain medical conditions; or people who are taking certain other medicines.

What else can I do to help manage my pain?

- Keep active and find enjoyable activities and pastimes
- Set small personal goals
- Try a different medicine
- Try a different treatment, such as physiotherapy
- Request a referral and talk to a team of people who specialise in managing pain.

If you feel that you need something else to help you manage your pain, talk to your prescriber, or pharmacist.



If you have any questions, ask your pharmacist or prescriber

Always read the label on your box of medicine and read the leaflet inside the box. Make sure you know exactly what the medicine is and what it is for.

Where can I find further information?

Ask your prescriber, pharmacist or nurse for leaflets about pain relievers and treating pain.

Organisations and websites that give support and advice for people living with pain:

- Action on Pain: www.action-on-pain.co.uk
- Welsh Pain Society: www.welshpainsociety.org.uk
- British Pain Society: www.britishpainsociety.org
- Pain Concern: www.painconcern.org.uk/
- The Pain Toolkit: www.paintoolkit.org/
- My Live Well With Pain: my.livewellwithpain.co.uk/
- NHS Chronic Pain A–Z health (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/ways-to-manage-chronic-pain/>)

Access this leaflet on your phone:

