Amiodarone Therapy

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered
# Your information

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<td>Name of GP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinician managing amiodarone</td>
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<td>Date treatment commenced</td>
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<td>Reason for therapy</td>
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<td>Expected duration of treatment</td>
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Introduction

This booklet has been given to you because you are starting to take a medicine known as amiodarone. A healthcare professional will go through this book with you, explain what it all means and answer any questions you may have. The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information regarding the safe use and monitoring of amiodarone. It is designed for patients or carers of patients who have been prescribed amiodarone.

As with all medicines, you should make sure that you read the manufacturer’s leaflet as well as this leaflet before you start taking amiodarone.

What is amiodarone and what is it used for?

Amiodarone belongs to the group of medicines known as anti-arrhythmics. It is used to control an irregular or rapid heart rate. It acts on the heart cells and slows the electrical signals sent through the heart.

Before taking amiodarone make sure that your doctor or pharmacist knows if you:

- have heart block which may cause a very slow, very fast or irregular pulse or dizziness
- have or have had thyroid problems
- have an allergy to amiodarone, iodine or any of the other ingredients
- are pregnant or likely to become pregnant
- are breast feeding
- suffer from any liver or kidney problems
Before treatment begins:

Amiodarone is usually prescribed by a heart specialist after a number of tests have been performed to ensure that amiodarone is suitable for you.

Your doctor will arrange various tests to check for medical problems that could make the medicine unsuitable for you.

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<tr>
<th>Test</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chest X-Ray</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liver Function Tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thyroid Function Tests</td>
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Dose

A high dose is used initially to achieve high levels of the medicine in your blood. This is then reduced to a once daily dose. The dose will be reduced to a usual dose of one 200mg tablet within a month of starting treatment. (If your dose is higher check with your GP).

Take your tablets at about the same time each day. Tablets should be swallowed whole with a glass of water.

You may not need to be on amiodarone long-term and will be reviewed regularly by your doctor.

Do not stop taking your tablets without talking to your doctor first.

If you miss a dose of amiodarone take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue taking it at the usual times. Never take two doses at the same time to make up. If in doubt speak to your doctor or pharmacist.
Monitoring you while you are taking amiodarone

Your GP or hospital doctor will arrange your blood tests for you. Please take your book with you to your appointment so the results can be recorded in the booklet.

Amiodarone can have effects in the body for a long time, even if you stop taking it. It is important that the monitoring below is carried out. Check with your GP if it’s over 6 months since your last test.

During treatment:
(Every 6 months and for 1 year after stopping therapy)

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Once all the boxes have been filled in, you may want to get another leaflet

Driving and using machinery

Amiodarone may cause blurred vision in some people. If this happens do not drive or operate machinery.

Alcohol

You should limit the amount of alcohol you drink whilst you are being treated with amiodarone.
Other Medicines

Some medicines may interact with amiodarone and affect its levels.

Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of the following:

- Antibiotics e.g. erythromycin, moxifloxacin, sulfamethoxazole, co-trimoxazole
- Antimalarials e.g. chloroquine
- Antipsychotics e.g. amisulpiride, haloperidol
- Antivirals e.g. nelfinavir
- Atorvastatin
- Beta-blockers
- Calcium channel inhibitor e.g. diltiazem, verapamil
- Other cardiac drugs e.g. flecainide, disopyramide, procainamide, quinidine,
- Ciclosporin
- Cimetidine
- Dabigatran
- Diuretics
- Digoxin
- Ivabradine
- Levothyroxine
- Lithium
- Orlistat
- Pentamidine
- Phenytoin
- Simvastatin (If the dose is greater than 20mg)
- Tricyclic antidepressants e.g. amitriptyline
- Warfarin – you may need to change the dose of warfarin when you start taking amiodarone and also if you stop amiodarone.

There may be other medicines (including over the counter and non-conventional medicines such as herbal supplements) that may interact so it’s always best to check with your GP or pharmacist if you are started on a new medicine. Do not take grapefruit juice whilst taking amiodarone.

Please note it takes a long time for amiodarone to be removed from the body so drug interactions can occur several weeks or even months after treatment has stopped.
Possible side-effects

Some side effects are not serious and only temporary such as feeling sick and headaches.

Skin

Whilst taking amiodarone you should avoid exposure of your skin to direct sunlight or sunlamps. When you are in the sun, wear a wide brimmed hat and keep your arms and legs covered. Apply a total sun-block to exposed areas of skin. This sensitivity can continue for up to 10 months after stopping amiodarone.

Amiodarone can cause your skin to have a blue or grey tinge, which should slowly decrease if amiodarone is stopped but it may not go completely. If you notice this, you should see your GP.

Eyes

You should get your eyes checked every year.

In rare cases blurred vision may occur or it may make you see a ‘halo’ around things. If you notice this you should tell your GP.

Thyroid Gland

Amiodarone can make you produce too little thyroid hormone which may make you feel tired and put on weight. However it may make you produce too much hormone making you sweat, feel shaky, lose weight or have a fast heart beat.

If you notice this you should tell your GP.

Heart

Amiodarone may cause heart problems, such as slowing of the heart. This may make you feel tired, dizzy or faint. If you notice this you should tell your GP as soon as possible.
Lungs
Early signs include a cough, breathlessness, and high temperature that doesn’t clear up or gets worse. If any of these occur see your GP immediately.

Liver
If you notice yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice) you should see your GP immediately.

Nervous System
This type of side effect includes shaking, unsteady walking, weakness of the hands or legs, and pins and needles. You should contact your GP as the dose may need to be lowered.
If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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