Amiodarone
Information for patients

Read this medicine fact sheet to learn about:

• What this medicine is
• Why you need to take it
• What side effects to watch for

What is the name of my medicine?
Amiodarone (pronounced Am – ee – oh – da – rone)

Other names for this medicine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Name</th>
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<td>Cordarone®, generics</td>
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Why do I need to take this medicine?

• To treat or prevent abnormal heartbeats (arrhythmias)

This medicine slows the electrical signals in your heart muscle. This helps your heartbeat go back to normal and helps your heart work better.
What do I need to know when taking this medicine?

• To check how the medicine is affecting your heart and body, you will need to visit your doctor regularly. You may also need other tests, including:
  ▪ electrocardiograms (ECG) to check your heartbeat
  ▪ blood tests to check how your liver and thyroid gland are working
  ▪ regular eye exams to check your vision
  ▪ chest x-rays and breathing tests to check your lungs

• This medicine may make your skin more sensitive to sunlight and burn more easily. If you have been taking amiodarone for a long time, sunlight may turn your skin a blue-grey colour. Stay out of direct sunlight.
  ▪ Use a sunscreen that is SPF 30 or higher and contains titanium or zinc oxide. Ask your pharmacist to help you choose the sunscreen that is best for you.
  ▪ Wear a hat, sunglasses and clothes that will protect you from the sun.
  ▪ Don’t use a tanning bed.

• Amiodarone can affect how other medicines like warfarin (Coumadin®) and digoxin (Lanoxin®) work. Your doctor may change the doses of your medicines when you start taking amiodarone.

• Don’t eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while taking amiodarone. Grapefruit can increase the amount of amiodarone in your body and increase the chances of side effects.

• To prevent upset stomach, try taking amiodarone with food.

• **Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicine.** This includes:
  ▪ medicines prescribed by a doctor or bought in a pharmacy
  ▪ vitamins or herbal remedies
What are the side effects of this medicine?

- headache
- losing your appetite
- nausea (feeling like you may throw up)
- vomiting
- dizziness
- diarrhea
- constipation
- becoming sensitive to sunlight
- feeling very tired (fatigue)

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.

These side effects are more likely to happen after taking amiodarone for a long time (about 12 months):

**Lung problems:**
- developing a cough and fever
- feeling short of breath or having difficulty breathing

**Eye problems:**
- blurred or decreased vision
- seeing blue-green halos around objects
- your eyes becoming sensitive to light
- having dry eyes

**Liver problems (rare):**
- your skin or whites of your eyes become yellow

**Thyroid problems:**
- dry, puffy skin
- becoming sensitive to heat or cold
- feeling unusually tired
- feeling nervous
- losing or gaining weight
- having a fast or irregular heartbeat
- swelling in your feet or lower legs

**Muscle or nerve problems:**
- numbness or tingling in your hands or feet
- your hands tremble or shake
- feeling weakness in your arms or legs
- unusual or uncontrollable body movements
Call your doctor right away if you:

- feel very dizzy or faint
- have chest pain
- have a very slow heartbeat (less than 50 beats per minute)
- have a fever

What should I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you remember.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time.

Who do I talk to if I have a problem or question?

This fact sheet does not cover all of the side effects that may happen. If you are concerned about any side effects, please ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information or advice.

If you are not sure what to do when taking this medicine, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca