

Cardiology

Amiodarone Treatment

What you need to know

April 2019

Great Staff – Great Care – Great Future

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet has been produced to give you general information about your Amiodarone treatment. Most of your questions should be answered by this leaflet. It is not intended to replace the discussion between you and your doctor, but may act as a starting point for discussion. If after reading it you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the healthcare team.

WHAT IS AMIODARONE?

Amiodarone comes from a class of drugs called 'anti-arrhythmic'.

Your doctor has prescribed you Amiodarone in the form of tablets which you will take every day in order to control your heartbeat. Your doctor will review you regularly to check the medication is working for you and you are not suffering any side effects.

When first starting on Amiodarone your doctor will check your thyroid function, liver function, kidney function and perform a chest X-ray and electrocardiogram (ECG). This will be the baseline for monitoring your treatment and side effects whilst taking Amiodarone and these results will be communicated to your doctor.

WHY DO I NEED AMIODARONE?

Amiodarone is used to help the heart beat more regularly controlling an irregular or rapid heart rate. This reduces palpitations, dizziness and blackouts which can occur if the heart beats too fast.

Amiodarone acts on the heart cells and regulates the heartbeat by affecting the rate electrical impulses pass through the heart.

CAN THERE BE ANY COMPLICATIONS OR RISKS?

Amiodarone can cause side effects which you should be aware of especially if you are taking Amiodarone as a long term treatment. For short term treatment side-effects may be temporary or not experienced. Please see your doctor if you start to experience any symptoms that may concern you.

- **Skin (Very common – greater than 1 in 10 who take Amiodarone)**
 - Amiodarone may make your skin more sensitive to sunlight
 - Redness, tingling, burning or blistering of the skin may occur when taking Amiodarone.
 - When in direct sunlight you should always **cover your head with a hat, wear long-sleeved top and apply total sun block cream to exposed skin.**
 - Avoid using sunbeds or sunlamps
 - This skin sensitivity can persist for several months after stopping treatment, continue above measures to protect the skin
 - You may also notice you suffer from dry skin or eczema during treatment
 - Amiodarone can also cause skin to have a blue / grey tinge. **If you notice this, you should see your doctor.**
- **Eyes (Very common – greater than 1 in 10 people who take Amiodarone)***
 - You may develop small deposits on the cornea
 - This does not interfere with daytime vision but you may be dazzled by headlights at night. **Be careful if you drive.**
 - If you develop blurred vision or any other visual disturbances, you should **tell your doctor immediately.**
- **Liver (Very common – greater than 1 in 10 who take Amiodarone)**
 - Can cause problems with liver function
 - In you notice yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice) you should see your doctor immediately.
 - Your doctor will check your liver function every 6 months.
- **Thyroid gland (Common – 1 in 100 to 1 in 10 people who take Amiodarone)***
 - Amiodarone can make you produce less thyroid hormone which may make you feel tired and put on weight.
 - It can also produce too much thyroid hormone which may make you sweat, feel shaky, lose weight or cause a faster heart rate.
 - If you notice any of these, you should tell your doctor
 - Your doctor will check your thyroid function every 6 months.
- **Lungs (Common – 1 in 100 to 1 in 10 people who take Amiodarone)**
 - Before you start Amiodarone treatment a chest X-ray will be performed, and this will be repeated annually to monitor any changes in your lungs.
 - Should you develop a cough, breathing difficulties, tiredness, weight loss or high temperature that does clear up or gets worse. **If any of these symptoms occur see your doctor immediately.**

- **Heart (Uncommon – 1 in 1000 to 1 in 100 people who take Amiodarone)**
 - Before you start Amiodarone treatment an ECG will be performed
 - 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 doctor as soon as possible.**

- **Other common side effects can occur in some people:**
 - Nausea and vomiting – resolved with dose reduction
 - Taste disturbance
 - Sleep disturbances

- **Can you drink alcohol whilst taking Amiodarone?**
 - If you choose to drink alcohol while taking this medicine, it is advisable that you only drink alcohol in moderation.

- **Driving and using machinery?**
 - Amiodarone may cause blurred vision in some people. If this happens do not drive or operate machinery.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

How should I take my Amiodarone?

- Do not stop taking this medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop.
- To build up the level of Amiodarone in the body quickly you will need to take more tablets at the beginning of your treatment.
- Initially you may take this drug three times a day then after a week you will probably take it twice a day. After a further week you will probably take the drug just once a day.
- It is important you follow the instructions on the label.
- Take your tablets at the same time each day.
- Tablets should be swallowed whole with a glass of water.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

- Take as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, do not take the one you missed. Take the next dose at the usual time. Do not double up the next dose

Other medicines

- Some medicines interact with Amiodarone. Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you take any regular medications or are started on any new medication.
- Herbal medicines may also interact with Amiodarone
- Do not take grapefruit juice whilst taking Amiodarone
- Please note it takes a long-time for Amiodarone to be removed from your body so drug interactions can occur several weeks or even months after treatment has stopped.

Should you require further advice on the issues contained in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact the Pharmacy Department at Castle Hill Hospital
Telephone: (01482) 623277

Alternatively you could contact your regular community pharmacy.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 we are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any information we hold about you. For further information visit the following page: [Confidential Information about You. www.hey.nhs.uk/privacy/data-protection](http://www.hey.nhs.uk/privacy/data-protection)

If you or your carer needs information about your health and well-being and about your care and treatment in a different format, such as large print, braille or audio, due to disability, impairment or sensory loss, please advise a member of staff and this can be arranged.

This leaflet was produced by the Pharmacy Department for the Cardiology Department, Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and will be reviewed in **April 2022**.

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