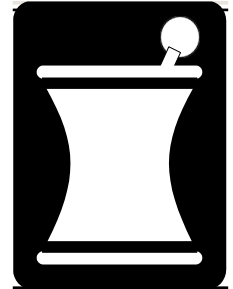


Atomoxetine

Patient Information - Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy

What is atomoxetine?

Atomoxetine is a non-stimulant medicine for the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is in a class of medicines called selective noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors. It works by increasing the amount of a naturally occurring chemical (neurotransmitter) in the brain called noradrenaline.



Is Atomoxetine safe to take?

It is usually safe to take atomoxetine regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but it doesn't suit everyone. Atomoxetine is normally used in children over the age of six years and for adolescents and adults.

Let your doctor know if you have the following, as extra care may be needed:

- High or low blood pressure, heart disease, a change on ECG called QT prolongation
- Liver or kidney problems
- Glaucoma
- Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid)
- Pheochromocytoma (an extremely rare condition)
- Epilepsy, seizures, fits or convulsions
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding

How should atomoxetine be taken and what should be done if a dose is missed?

Look at the label on your medicine; it should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow this advice carefully. If you or your child have any questions, speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse. Atomoxetine is taken once or twice daily with or without food. You should swallow the whole capsule. Never change your dose without checking with your doctor. If you or your child forgets a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time. Do not take a double dose to make up for missed doses.

What will happen when atomoxetine is started ?

Atomoxetine does not work straight away. You may notice improvement during the first week of your treatment, but it may take up to one month for you to feel the full benefit of atomoxetine. Atomoxetine is usually prescribed for a period of several months to years. Like all medicines, atomoxetine can have side effects but not everyone gets them. Look at

the table over the page. It tells you what to do if you get any side-effects. Many of these can be quite mild and should go away after a week or so. There are many other possible side-effects. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side-effect.

Are there other medicines that should be avoided or taken care with?

Always tell your doctor what you are taking and ask your pharmacist before you buy any “other-the-counter” medicines because atomoxetine can interact with a number of other medicines, for example some antidepressants can be problematic if taken with atomoxetine.

How long should your child keep taking atomoxetine?

If your child stops taking atomoxetine, their original symptoms may return, however it is likely that at some stage it will be appropriate for your child to stop taking it. Most people stop taking these medicines by the time they finish their formal education.

At least every two years the medication should be reviewed by a specialist to see if it is still appropriate. It is important to learn strategies to cope with the symptoms of ADHD and not to solely rely on medicine as the only treatment strategy.

What about alcohol and marijuana?

It is recommended that people taking atomoxetine do not drink alcohol, use marijuana or other recreational drugs. Alcohol, marijuana and other recreational drugs can increase some of the effects of atomoxetine and increase side effects.

They can often make your symptoms worse.

Will atomoxetine increase the risk of drug abuse in later years?

Young people with ADHD are at increased risk for alcohol and drug use however the available evidence does not indicate that treatment with atomoxetine will increase the risk of this.

Recommended websites

HealthInfo Canterbury: www.healthinfo.org.nz

ADHD Support Group: www.adhd.org.nz

American Academy Facts for Families:
www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families

Medsafe New Zealand: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/dsform.asp

NIHM: www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics

The Royal College of Psychiatrists: www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation.aspx

| Side Effects | What is it? | What should I do if this happens to me? |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| COMMON | | |
| Tachycardia | A faster heartbeat. It may feel like palpitations. You generally will not notice this. | Your doctor will check blood pressure and pulse before and after starting atomoxetine and discuss this with you if it is a problem. Contact your doctor if you or your child feel dizzy, faint or feel your heart racing without reason. |
| Hypertension | High blood pressure. You generally will not notice this. | Your doctor will check blood pressure and pulse before and after starting atomoxetine and discuss this if it is a problem. |
| Headache | When your head is pounding and painful. | You or your child can take paracetamol for this. Discuss with your doctor if prolonged. |
| Insomnia | Difficulty in being able to get to sleep at night. | Discuss this with your doctor. |
| Dry mouth | Not much saliva or spit. Dry mouth can cause problems with speech, taste, chewing and swallowing. It can also increase the risk of getting dental decay and infection in your mouth. | To help prevent dental problems sip water regularly to moisten your mouth. Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Avoid sugary drinks and snacks between meals. Try sugar free chewing gum to stimulate saliva or discuss using an oral lubricant with your pharmacist or dentist. |
| Decrease in appetite | Feeling like eating less when on this medication. | Eat breakfast with your morning dose and discuss this with your doctor especially if you/your child loses weight. |
| Nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain | Feeling sick, throwing up and having a sore stomach. | Taking each dose with or after food may help. If it is bad, contact your doctor. |
| Somnolence and sedation | Feeling sleepy and tired. | Usually this goes away with time, however, your doctor might suggest you take atomoxetine at night. |
| LESS COMMON | | |
| Sexual dysfunction | Lack of libido or no interest in sex. Inability to maintain an erection or have an orgasm. | Discuss this with your doctor. |

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| Constipation | Feeling “bunched up” inside. You can’t pass a bowel motion. | Eat more fibre, e.g. bran, fruit and vegetables. Spend more time walking. Make sure you drink plenty of fluid. A mild laxative from a pharmacy might help. |
| Urinary retention | Difficulty in passing urine. | Discuss this with your doctor when you next meet. |
| Allergic reaction | A sudden onset of skin rash, itching, swelling, of the face, lips and tongue, difficulty breathing. | Contact your doctor or the emergency department immediately. |

RARE

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| Seizures | Having fits or blackout | Stop taking your atomoxetine and contact your doctor or emergency department immediately. |
| Dysmenorrhoea | Painful periods in females | Discuss this with your doctor when you next meet. |
| Increase in suicidal thinking | Suicidal thoughts or behaviours (including agitation, irritability, unusual changes in behaviour) | Contact your doctor immediately. |
| Raynaud's Phenomenon | Numbness, tingling and colour change (white, blue then red) in fingers and toes when exposed to cold | Tell your doctor immediately or go to the Emergency Department |

Signs of liver dysfunction: Contact doctor immediately and stop taking atomoxetine if you experience these symptoms:

- Extremely itchy skin
- Dark urine.
- Jaundice (yellow tinge in the eyes and yellow skin)
- Tenderness on the right side of your abdomen.
- Unexplained "flu-like" symptoms with nausea and vomiting.
- Feeling very tired or lacking in energy.
- Weakness.

Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet, you may find a lot of information there as well. Be careful as internet-based information is not always accurate.

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