

Supportive care

Tapentadol (Palexia®)

Tapentadol is used to treat pain that is difficult to control. The possible benefits of treatment vary; your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment.

We may be recommending this medicine to be used for a condition it was not originally designed for; so you may find that there are some differences between the hospital and the manufacturer's information. This additional information will inform you of the reason(s) why you are taking this medicine and to highlight any other information. This should be read in conjunction with the manufacturer's patient information leaflet.

What is tapentadol?

Tapentadol is a painkiller indicated for moderate to severe pain. It belongs to a group of medicines called opioids. Opioids refer to morphine and morphine type medicines.

What dose of tapentadol is usually prescribed?

The dose of tapentadol prescribed will depend on the type of pain you have and the doses of painkillers you have taken previously. Your doctor will discuss this with you and recommend a suitable starting dose.

You need to take tapentadol exactly as prescribed by your doctor and outlined in the product information leaflet.

There are different strengths of the extended release and short-acting forms of tapentadol. Depending on your prescription, The Christie Pharmacy may dispense differing strengths. Please be vigilant and take the correct dose. It is also important not to escalate or stop taking this drug without authorisation by your pain specialist.

How do I take tapentadol?

The long-acting tablets should be taken every 12 hours. When you are at home, take your morning dose when you wake up and the evening dose about 12 hours later.

Tapentadol should be taken with a full glass of water, with or without food. **DO NOT crush, chew, break or dissolve the extended release tablet.** It must be swallowed whole as breaking the tablet will result in too much of the drug being released at once and rapid absorption of a dose that may be potentially fatal. If the pain comes back between your regular doses, you can take a dose of quick acting oxycodone. Wait 30-60 minutes after taking the extra dose. If you still have severe pain, take a second dose of the short acting 'as needed' pain medication. If you need more than 2-3 extra doses of short acting pain medication in a day, tell your doctor or nurse as all of your pain medication may need adjusting.



Who should not take tapentadol?

It is important you inform your doctor if any of the following apply:

- You have a history of severe allergies including an allergy to tapentadol
- You think you might be pregnant or are planning to get pregnant
- You are breast feeding
- You are known to have the rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, the Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption
- You are currently taking monoamine oxidase inhibitors or are within 14 days of such therapy or any other antidepressant.
- You have any of the following conditions: bowel strictures, breathing disorders, liver or kidney disease, epilepsy or seizure disorders, gallbladder disease or problems with your pancreas.

What are the possible risks or side effects?

Tiredness or sleepiness may occur; however this often settles shortly after starting tapentadol. Other side effects may include sickness, constipation, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, dry mouth and confusion. A serious but uncommon side effect is an allergic reaction, symptoms of which include wheeziness, difficulty breathing, swelling of the lips, eyelids or face, a rash or itching. For further information on side effects, please see the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine.

If tapentadol is taken with antidepressants, please let the supportive care, pain team, or out of hours services know immediately if you become agitated, hallucinate, lose consciousness, or experience a fast heart rate, uncoordinated movement, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. These symptoms may indicate serotonin syndrome. With antidepressants, the risk of seizures are increased if the recommended dose range of tapentadol is exceeded.

DO NOT suddenly stop taking tapentadol or you may experience a range of unpleasant side effects.

Can I take tapentadol with my other medications?

All of your medications will be reviewed when you start tapentadol. It rarely causes problems with other medications; however, certain anti-depressant medications can interact. Your doctor will check if this will be a problem for you. If you are buying any medicines over-the-counter from a pharmacy always mention that you have been prescribed tapentadol. It is safe to take paracetamol with this medicine. Advice from your doctor, or pharmacist should be sought when purchasing alternative medicines, including herbal or homeopathic remedies.

Is tapentadol addictive?

If used appropriately, it is rare for someone who is taking tapentadol for pain relief to become addicted. However, your body may become dependent on tapentadol whilst taking it and stopping abruptly may cause withdrawal symptoms such as feeling restless or irritable. If you have been taking it for some time and want to stop it, your doctor will recommend that you reduce your dose slowly in order to avoid the risk of these effects.

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you miss a dose try to take it as soon as you remember. However if it is almost time for your next usual dose, wait until then to take your medicine and skip the missed dose. Never double up the dose to make up for a missed dose. If you are sick within one hour of taking an oral dose of tapentadol repeat the dose as soon as you feel better. If you are sick more than one hour after taking your medicine, wait until your next dose is due before taking it.

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You may take a short acting 'as needed' dose of pain medication for any pain you have until it is time to take your next regular long acting dose. If you miss more than one dose through being unwell, contact your doctor.

Can I drink alcohol if I am taking tapentadol?

You should avoid drinking alcohol if you are taking tapentadol. This is because alcohol may increase some of the side effects of tapentadol. Remember that alcohol will also affect your ability to drive or operate machinery.

Can I drive if I am taking tapentadol?

You should inform the DVLA if you are taking tapentadol or any other opioid for persistent pain. Driving should be avoided when commencing therapy, or during periods of dose adjustment, when you are at a greater risk of feeling drowsy, dizzy, having blurred vision or a slow reaction time. If these symptoms are being experienced then do not use tools or machinery.

Who will initiate tapentadol and issue further prescriptions?

Usually the supportive care team will initiate tapentadol, but it can be started and also prescribed by your GP on the advice of the supportive care or pain team. We will confirm with your GP if they are able to continue prescribing tapentadol.

If your GP is willing to prescribe tapentadol, please don't leave it too late to request a prescription. You should request a prescription at least 72 hours in advance to give your GP and community pharmacist time to make the arrangements.

If you are attending The Christie supportive care or pain clinic for follow up, tapentadol may be dispensed by The Christie Pharmacy. You should be given sufficient supply to last you until your next review.

If you run out of tapentadol and are unable to get a further supply, you must contact the supportive care or pain team for advice.

How should tapentadol be stored?

Tapentadol should be kept in a safe place out of reach of children and pets. The expiry date is printed on the container. Do not use the medicine after this date. Any unused medication should be returned to your local pharmacy to be discarded.

Who should I phone if I need advice urgently about tapentadol?

Monday to Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm contact the supportive care team on **0161 446 3559**, or **0161 446 8493**.

During the evening or at weekends and bank holidays, if you have any queries, contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**.

Useful contacts:

- Secretary: supportive care team **0161 446 3559**
- Secretary: pain team **0161 446 8493**
- Supportive care pharmacist **0161 446 3443**
- The Christie Pharmacy **0161 446 3432 / 3433**

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

