

Gynaecology Department - Vulval Clinics

Amitriptyline and Nortriptyline

In some women with vulval pain the nerves supplying the vulva are irritated and send abnormal signals back to the spinal cord, where they are interpreted by the brain as pain. This can occur even when the skin is not being touched.

The most experience to date in treating vulval pain has been with the tricyclic antidepressants, especially Amitriptyline (A-me-trip-ti-leen). As well as working as antidepressants, these drugs alter the way the nerve fibres transmit the sensation of pain, and are a useful painkiller for many types of chronic pain, especially burning, shooting or stabbing pain and pain which keeps you awake at night.

You are not being given this drug because you are depressed.

How to take the tablets

Amitriptyline and Nortriptyline (Nor-trip-ti-leen) are started at low doses (10mg) and then increased every few days to a more standard level (50-100mg) until the pain subsides. The response to treatment is not overnight and may take several weeks, although some patients may notice some relief of pain in a few days. The average dose for most patients is 60mg per day. It is often necessary to continue with treatment for three to six months.

The medication may be taken on an empty or a full stomach.

It is best to take it about an hour before going to bed as it may cause drowsiness.

These drugs are not addictive, but should not be stopped suddenly. The dose should be gradually reduced over about **four weeks**.



Patient Information

Side effects

The major drawback for some women on treatment is the side-effects; however, these usually settle within the first few weeks of treatment and are not usually worsened by increasing the dose.

The commonest side-effect is that of tiredness. If this occurs try taking the tablets before you go to bed. If this makes you sleepy in the morning and you have difficulty getting out of bed, try taking the tablets slightly earlier at teatime.

Constipation, having a dry mouth and occasional blurred vision are other possible side-effects whilst on treatment. If you are constipated, try taking Senna or Fybogel which are weak bowel stimulants.

If you have any severe symptoms which are worrying you contact your GP or the vulval clinic for advice.

It is not advisable to drink alcohol whilst taking these tablets, as it may make you more drowsy. If the tablets do make you drowsy or dizzy do not drive or operate machinery

Tell your doctor if:

Amitriptyline and Nortriptyline are not suitable for everyone. You should tell your doctor if you:

- Have any drug allergies;
- Are taking any other medicines;
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding, or plan to become pregnant;
- Are using oral contraception;
- Have recently had a heart attack or any other heart problems;
- Have epilepsy or seizures;
- Have any problems with your liver, kidneys or thyroid
- Have diabetes or glaucoma;
- Have any psychiatric problems;
- Are taking a drug called a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI).

Patient Information

Follow the plan below:

Increase the dose by 10mg every 3 days until the pain is better. When the pain is better, you should stay at that dose, there is no need to increase the dose any further.

Amitriptyline / Nortriptyline

Day/Date	10pm Evening dose	Comments (Effects and side effects)
1	10mg (one tablet)	
4	20mg (two tablets)	
7	30mg (three tablets)	
10	40mg (four tablets)	
13	50mg (five tablets)	
16	60mg (six tablets)	
19	70mg (seven tablets)	

Patient Information

Further Information

If you have any questions, please contact:

The Colposcopy clinic 024 7696 7222 (8.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday).

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7222 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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