

Dexamfetamine for the treatment of narcolepsy

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with some information about dexamfetamine which has been prescribed to treat your narcolepsy. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor, pharmacist or nurse caring for you.

What is narcolepsy?

Narcolepsy is a long-term condition which causes excessive sleepiness during the day and may disrupt your sleep at night. You can also have sleep attacks where you fall asleep at inappropriate times during the day without any warning.

What is dexamfetamine?

Dexamfetamine belongs to a group of medicines called stimulants. It can be used to treat some of the symptoms of narcolepsy. Dexamfetamine works by stimulating your brain to increase alertness and reduce excessive sleepiness during the day. Although there is no cure for narcolepsy, dexamfetamine can help to control your symptoms.

How do I take the medicine?

When starting dexamfetamine, your consultant will give you a small dose at first, and then increase depending on your symptoms.

Dexamfetamine should be taken in divided doses during the day. To begin with you may be prescribed just one or two doses every day, but this may be increased up to three doses every day. Make sure you take dexamfetamine exactly how your consultant or pharmacist tells you to. It should not be taken after 3pm, to avoid disrupting your sleep at night.

It is important to take your doses at the **same time each day** as this will help prevent you from missing any doses. Dexamfetamine can be taken with or without food.

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

Don't worry. Just remember to take the next dose when it is due. **Do not take two doses together to make up for the forgotten dose.**

Are there any side effects?

In addition to their desired effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side effects, although not everyone gets them. The following are examples of some of the side effects reported by patients taking dexamfetamine. The unwanted effects often fade as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your GP or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

For further information on side effects, please see the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine.

Side effect	What should I do if it happens?
Common (between one in 100 and one in 10)	
Feeling or being sick Stomach cramps	Stick to simple meals – avoid rich or spicy foods
Feeling dizzy Eyesight problems	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines
Headache	Drink plenty of water and take your usual painkiller, for example, paracetamol. If the headache continues, speak with your GP
Dry mouth, unusual taste	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets
Diarrhoea	Drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids
Sleeping problems Feeling unsteady or shaky Lack of appetite Weight loss Hair thinning Itchy rash Sweating Unusual movements Sexual difficulties	Speak with your GP if you experience any of these
Rare (between one in 10,000 and one in 1,000)	
Feeling dizzy, eyesight problems	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines
Diarrhoea	Drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids

Important: if you experience any of the following symptoms, contact your GP for advice **as soon as possible:**

- any changes to your mood, behaviour, or thinking
- chest pain, fast heartbeat, or unexplained breathlessness
- any suicidal thoughts, or thoughts about harming yourself.

Can I take dexamfetamine with other medicines?

Dexamfetamine may interact with some medicines. It is therefore important to let us know about any medicines that you are currently taking, so that we can check dexamfetamine is suitable for you. If you are buying any medicines over the counter from a pharmacy, always mention that you have been prescribed dexamfetamine. It is safe to take paracetamol and ibuprofen with this medicine. Seek advice when buying herbal or homeopathic remedies.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Do not drink alcohol while taking dexamfetamine, as it increases the risk of side effects such as mood changes, confusion, sleep disturbances, increased drowsiness.

Taking dexamfetamine can lead to your body becoming dependent on it, so you should not stop taking dexamfetamine unless your consultant tells you to do so. Stopping abruptly may cause side effects such as extreme fatigue. It is recommended that your dose should be reduced gradually if stopping treatment. This will be discussed with you before you start treatment.

If you are due to have an operation or dental treatment, it is important that you tell your consultant, GP or dentist who can advise you further.

Narcolepsy and driving: In the UK, you are required by law to let the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) know if you are diagnosed with narcolepsy. You may be allowed to drive again when your symptoms are well controlled with medication, but you will need to have regular reviews. Your consultant will advise you about this.

If you are a driver, please be aware that dexamfetamine may affect your reactions and ability to drive. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired. Even if your driving ability is not impaired, if you drive, you are advised to carry some evidence with you which shows that the medicine has been prescribed for you – a repeat prescription form or the patient information leaflet from the packet is generally considered suitable.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding:

We do not recommend the use of this medicine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. You should let your consultant know if you are planning a pregnancy so that a management plan can be agreed. If you discover that you are pregnant, please contact your consultant for advice as soon as possible.

Sleep hygiene: Taking dexamfetamine is not a replacement for a good sleep routine. It is still important to aim to get around seven to eight hours of sleep at night if possible. It is advisable to go to bed when tired, and get up at about the same time each day.

Dexamfetamine is a controlled drug. It should be stored safely and kept out of reach of children. If anyone other than you takes this medicine, you, they, or their parent/carer should contact NHS 111 for advice. If they are unwell then they should call for an ambulance.

The expiry date is printed on the container. Do not use the medicine after this date. The remainder should be returned to your local pharmacy to be thrown away.

If you are planning a trip abroad, you are advised to carry a letter with you from your doctor to explain that you have been prescribed dexamfetamine. This is because it is classed as a controlled drug and is subject to certain restrictions.

How will my treatment be reviewed?

Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis at the sleep centre and the dose adjusted depending on your symptoms. This will be a long-term treatment if it is of benefit. Your consultant will want to check to ensure that the treatment is helping. You may need to have your blood pressure and heart rate checked regularly.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for dexamfetamine. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early so that you don't run out or risk missing any doses of your medication.

If your GP won't supply your dexamfetamine, the Sleep Centre will continue to provide you with a prescription which you can take to the Outpatient Pharmacy on site for supply. Please note that this prescription can only be used at the hospital Outpatient Pharmacy and will not be accepted in your local community pharmacy.

Useful sources of information

Narcolepsy UK, **w:** www.narcolepsy.org.uk. You might find this charity's website useful for connecting with patients who suffer from the same condition as you, but any information found should not alter your current treatment. You should discuss any new advice with the doctor caring for your condition.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder please contact the Sleep Disorder Centre, **t:** 020 7188 3430, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Out of hours, please leave a message and a member of staff will call you back in working hours, or contact your GP or NHS 111.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

w: www.nhs.uk

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