Sertraline for the treatment of non-REM parasomnias

This leaflet gives you information about sertraline, which has been prescribed to treat your sleep disorder. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor, pharmacist or nurse caring for you.

What are non-REM parasomnias?
Sleep is divided into two different stages: rapid eye movement (REM), where we do most of our dreaming, and non-REM (which can be divided again, in to light and deep stages of sleep).

People who have non-REM parasomnias have partial awakenings from deep sleep during the night. This leads to people having abnormal, unwanted events or experiences, sometimes being able to perform complex tasks, which they may not remember as they are still partially asleep. This can include sleepwalking or experiencing sleep terrors. In extreme cases, non-REM parasomnias can cause physical injury or severe emotional upset.

What is sertraline?
Sertraline belongs to a group of medicines called anti-depressants, but it can also be used to treat non-REM parasomnia. Sertraline works by altering the levels of certain chemicals in the brain, which can help to reduce the number of partial awakenings in patients with non-REM parasomnias.

Taking an unlicensed medicine
The use of sertraline for the treatment of non-REM parasomnia is unlicensed, which means that the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way. However, there is evidence that it works to treat this particular condition. The leaflet, Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline (details are at the end of this leaflet).

How do I take the medicine?
For the treatment of non-REM parasomnia, sertraline should be taken once a day, in the morning. Sertraline should be taken whole and may be taken with or without food. Keep taking the medicine until your doctor tells you otherwise. Stopping suddenly can cause problems and your doctor will want you to reduce your dose gradually if you need to stop treatment.

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?
If you forget to take the dose in the morning, don’t worry. You can take your dose as soon as you remember, but try not to take sertraline within a couple of hours of your bedtime as your sleep may be disrupted. Take the next dose when it is due the following morning. Do not take an extra dose the following morning to make up for the missed 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 common side effects reported by patients taking fluoxetine. 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.

### Important:
If you experience any of the following symptoms, contact your GP for advice as soon as possible:
- Any changes to your mood (such as feeling anxious, nervous or agitated), behaviour, or thinking (forgetful).
- Any suicidal thoughts, or thoughts about harming yourself.

### Is there anything else I need to know?
It can take a week or two after starting this treatment before the effect builds up, and up to four weeks before you feel the full benefit. It is important that you continue taking it, even if you think it is not helping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side effect</th>
<th>What should I do if it happens?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very common (more than one in 10)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling or being sick</td>
<td>Stick to simple foods. Avoid rich or spicy foods.</td>
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<td>Indigestion</td>
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<td>Diarrhoea</td>
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<td>Headache</td>
<td>Drink plenty of water and take your usual painkiller, for example, paracetamol.</td>
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<td>Difficulty sleeping, fatigue</td>
<td>If this becomes troublesome, speak with your GP.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Common (between one in 100 and one in 10)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dry mouth, changes in taste</td>
<td>Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling dizzy, tired or weak</td>
<td>If this happens, do not drive or use tools or machinery until you feel better. Do not drink alcohol.</td>
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<td>Blurred vision</td>
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<td>Flushing or sweating</td>
<td>Take care not to become overheated during exercise or hot weather</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yawning, bad dreams</td>
<td>If any of these become troublesome, speak with your GP.</td>
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<td>Loss of appetite, or weight</td>
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<td>Aches and pains</td>
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<td>Reduced sexual drive or ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palpitations</td>
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<td>Itching</td>
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<td>Difficulty in passing urine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of concentration, eyesight problems</td>
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</table>
You may have distressing thoughts while taking sertraline (especially if you are depressed), and think about harming yourself or ending your life. **Important:** If this happens, you must tell your doctor about it **as soon as possible.**

Sertraline can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. You should try to avoid strong sunlight, and use a sun cream with a high protection factor. Do not use sunbeds.

Sertraline can alter the levels of sugar in your blood. If you have diabetes you may need to check your blood sugar more regularly. Your GP can advise you about this.

Do not drink alcohol while taking sertraline as it may increase symptoms of depression or anxiety, cause increased dizziness, drowsiness or co-ordination issues.

If you are a driver, please be aware that sertraline 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.

Sertraline should be 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, 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.

**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 sertraline 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.

**Can I take sertraline with other medicines?**
Sertraline may interact with some medicines. It is important to let us know about any medicines that you are currently taking, so that we can check sertraline is suitable for you. If you are buying any medicines over the counter from a pharmacy, always mention that you have been prescribed sertraline. Seek advice from a pharmacist when buying herbal or homeopathic remedies. Do not take the herbal remedy St John's wort. It is safe to take paracetamol with this medicine, but ask for advice before buying any anti-inflammatory painkillers, such as ibuprofen or aspirin.

**How will my treatment be reviewed?**
Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis at the Sleep Disorders 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 make sure 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 sertraline which you can take to your local pharmacy for supply. Should your GP not prescribe melatonin for you, please contact the Sleep Disorders Centre for advice. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early enough to prevent you running out, or missing, any doses of your medication.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder, please contact the Sleep Disorders 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

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch. 
t: 0800 731 0319 e: members@gstt.nhs.uk w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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