



Patient information service
Bristol Heart Institute
Adult congenital heart disease

Amiodarone



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What does it do?

Amiodarone (pronounced 'ah-me-oh-darone') is used to treat your heart rate if your heart is not beating regularly. This may mean your heart misses a beat, beats irregularly, or beats at the wrong speed. This happens with some heart conditions more than others.

How does it work?

Amiodarone affects the rhythm of your heartbeats. It is used to help keep the heart beating normally in people with life-threatening heart rhythm disorders of the ventricles (the lower chambers of the heart that allow blood to flow out of the heart).

Before taking amiodarone

Before you start taking amiodarone, it is important that your doctor knows:

- if you have heart failure or any heart problems other than your abnormal heart rhythm
- if you have prostate, liver or kidney problems
- if you have ever had problems with your thyroid
- if you have a pacemaker fitted
- if you have glaucoma (increased pressure in your eye)
- if you have been told you have myasthenia gravis (a condition causing muscle weakness) or porphyria (a rare inherited blood disorder)
- **if you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding**

- if you are taking or using any other medicines. This includes any medicines that are available to buy without a prescription, such as herbal and complementary medicines
- if you have ever had an allergic reaction to any medicine.

How to take it

It is usual to take 200mg three times a day for the first week, then 200mg twice a day for the second week. Your dose may then be reduced to 200mg each day from the third week. It is very important that you take amiodarone exactly as your doctor tells you to.

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember (unless it is nearly time for your next dose, in which case leave out the missed dose).

Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

Your doctor will also want to do some blood tests while you are on amiodarone to check your liver and thyroid function.

If you drink alcohol, ask your doctor for advice about drinking while you are on amiodarone.

Your doctor is likely to recommend that you have an eyesight test each year. This is because you may develop deposits in your eyes. This is not likely to affect your vision, but if you are a driver, you may find that you are dazzled by headlights if you drive at night.

Taking amiodarone may cause your skin to become more sensitive to sunlight. Whenever you go out in strong sunlight, use a sunscreen that has a sun protection factor of 15 and also protects your skin against UVA light. Do not use sunbeds.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking amiodarone.

Pregnancy and amiodarone

The use of this medicine during pregnancy is not recommended. You should only take this medicine during pregnancy if your doctor thinks that you need it.

You need to discuss your specific circumstances with your doctor to weigh up the overall risks and benefits of taking this medicine. You and your doctor can make a decision about whether you are going to take this medicine during pregnancy.

Side effects

These affect around one in 10 people who take this medicine.

Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following side effects continue or become troublesome:

- blurred vision
- feeling either extremely tired and weak, or extremely restless and agitated
- feeling or being sick
- blue or grey marks on areas of your skin exposed to the sun
- changes in the way things taste, feeling shaky, nightmares and difficulties sleeping.

Monitoring

You will need to have your bloods monitored while on this drug – your GP will advise you on this. You will need a thyroid check every six months, as this drug may affect your thyroid levels.

Important

If you experience any of the following rare but possibly serious symptoms, contact your doctor for advice straightaway:

- any difficulties breathing, or if you develop an unexplained cough
- any yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes
- a severe skin rash. This could be a sign of an allergic reaction.

You may wish to write down any questions you have for your cardiologist or GP:

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Specialist nurse contact information:

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Adult congenital heart specialist nurse

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Wendy Visser

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Website for more information

<http://www.patient.co.uk/medicine/amiodarone.htm>

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol** on **0117 922 2255**.

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit:
www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation
or call the research and innovation team on
0117 342 0233.

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000



Minicom: 0117 934 9869



www.uhbristol.nhs.uk



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please call the patient information service:



0117 342 3728 / 3725

