



Amitriptyline

The first thing to make clear is that while amitriptyline was originally developed as an antidepressant drug, that is **NOT** the reason it has been prescribed for you. This tablet has the unexpected yet useful property of acting against the particular type of pain that you are suffering from.

In the low dose that you have been prescribed (lower than would be used for depression) this tablet reduces the ability of 'damaged nerves' to send 'pain messages' and so the amount of pain experienced is decreased. If no side-effects develop then the dose may be increased.

The tablet is usually taken at night because it can make you feel sleepy. This can also be an advantage since many pain sufferers find that their sleep is disturbed. However, if you need to drive or operate machinery then care should be taken. When taking amitriptyline for the first time, try and avoid doing anything energetic the next morning and instead just get used to how the tablet affects you.

This medication does have some other side-effects that may occur. The most common are a 'hang-over feeling in the morning and a somewhat dry mouth. To deal with the dry mouth it is simply a case of drinking small amounts often. To reduce the hang-over effect it may be wise to try taking the tablet a few hours before bedtime rather than as you get into bed. It may require some experimentation to get the timing 'just right' for you.

As the weeks pass these side-effects become less noticeable as your body adapts to the drug.

Other side-effects occur much less commonly and include

1. Blurred vision
2. Constipation
3. Difficulty passing urine

Special Points

1. If you ever require an anaesthetic for an operation always inform the anaesthetist that you take this tablet as it may have some bearing on the medications that you are given.

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2. If you are being treated for heart disease, then amitriptyline may cause problems with the rhythm of the heart or the blood pressure, but this is only really an issue when amitriptyline is taken in high doses.