



# Duloxetine

(Pronounced dew-lox-a-teen)

## Why has duloxetine been prescribed?

Duloxetine is an antidepressant. This medication is prescribed to treat depression and other mood disorders such as anxiety. Duloxetine is also used to treat diabetic neuropathic pain and stress urinary incontinence in women.

## What are the benefits of taking duloxetine?

Antidepressants are effective in reducing the severity of the symptoms of depression. They also shorten the time to recovery and prevent depression returning.

## Are there any precautions with duloxetine?

Duloxetine is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually state that it is safe to prescribe duloxetine, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have epilepsy, glaucoma, a history of stomach ulcers or suffer from high blood pressure, heart, liver or kidney trouble.
- If you are taking any other medication especially antidepressants, an antibiotic called ciprofloxacin, anticoagulants such as warfarin, strong pain killers or medication for bipolar disorder. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines. St John's Wort should not be taken by patients prescribed duloxetine.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

## What is the usual dose of duloxetine?

The starting dose may be between 30 and 60mg depending on the condition for which it has been prescribed. This may sometimes be increased after a few weeks. The usual dose of duloxetine for depression is 60mg once a day.

## How should duloxetine be taken?

Duloxetine is usually taken once a day. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine another way.

## What form does duloxetine come in?

Duloxetine is available only as capsules. The capsules are available as 20mg, 30mg, 40mg and 60mg.

## What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the next day's dose. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

## What will happen when duloxetine is first taken?

Duloxetine, like many medicines, does not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. To begin with, some people find that duloxetine may help them feel more alert and less slowed down. Later, (usually in two to three weeks) other symptoms should begin to improve. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We

have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

## Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0808 100 3352 or go to [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

## Is duloxetine addictive?

Duloxetine is not addictive, but if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings. Symptoms include insomnia, dizziness, nausea, agitation and anxiety. Reducing the dose of duloxetine slowly may make these symptoms less severe.

## What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking duloxetine should not drink alcohol. This is because both antidepressants and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make depression and anxiety worse. However, once people are used to taking medication, then *very small amounts* of alcohol may not be harmful. It pays to be very careful, because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

## Is it OK to stop taking duloxetine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking duloxetine your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to remain on duloxetine for at least six months after they have fully recovered. You should always discuss with your prescriber any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines.

## Are there any alternatives to duloxetine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although antidepressants have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are more than 20 antidepressants available so most people can find one which suits them. Psychological therapies can also help in some types of depression, either as an alternative to medication or alongside it.

## Summary of side effects



**Nausea - Very common**

**What can be done about it?**



### Dry mouth - Common

#### What can be done about it?

This should wear off within a few days. Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.



### Constipation – Very common

#### What can be done about it?

Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. Your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.



### Insomnia or disturbed sleep - Common

#### What can be done about it?

This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if it persists.



### Sexual dysfunction – Common (reduced libido (desire) and lack of orgasm in males and females. Impotence in males)

#### What can be done about it?

Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.



### Headache – Common

#### What can be done about it?

This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Blurred vision	<p><b>Uncommon</b></p> <p>This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. It may be necessary to switch to another</p>

	medication. Symptoms will go away when switched to another medication.
Dizziness	<b>Uncommon</b> This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if it persists.
Sweating	<b>Uncommon</b> This sometimes wears off but may persist. Tell your prescriber if it becomes troublesome.
Loss of appetite	<b>Uncommon</b> Some people lose a pound or two. Discuss with your prescriber if you lose more than this.
Urinary retention (difficulty passing water)	<b>Rare</b> Contact your prescriber straightaway if you have any difficulty passing water.

Very common = almost everyone affected

Common = many people affected

Uncommon = some people affected

Rare = few people affected

Very rare = very few or no one affected

## Disclaimer

This leaflet does not replace the official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information, visit [www.slam.nhs.uk/meds](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/meds) or speak to a health care professional.

**Leaflet supplied by:** Medicines Information, Pharmacy Department, Maudsley Hospital, London SE5 8AZ | Telephone: 020 3228 2317

**Artwork by:** Oscar Millar ([www.millarstratton.co.uk](http://www.millarstratton.co.uk))