

Medication Information Sheet



Tramadol

brands: Ultram[®], Ultracet[®], Ultram ER[®]

Medications are only ONE part of a successful treatment plan. They are appropriate when they provide benefit, improve function and have either no or mild, manageable side effects. Importantly, medications (even if natural) are chemical substances not expected in the body, and as such have side effects. Some of the side effects might be unknown. The use of medications/drugs for any purpose requires patient consent. This practice does NOT require a patient to use any medication.

Information & potential benefits

Tramadol is a pain reliever. It fills a unique space between non-opioid medications (like acetaminophen & ibuprofen) and opioid medications (like oxycodone & morphine). Tramadol is a centrally acting opioid that has atypical opioid properties, but is not considered a controlled substance in the United States. Tramadol has both pain killing properties (similar to opioids) and anti-depressant-type qualities (similar to serotonin medications). Therefore, it also has side effects of both pain killers and anti-depressants.

Potential risks and side effects

The most common side effects of tramadol are stomach upset and constipation. Seizures can occur in patients who abuse tramadol, use antidepressants or who have a history of seizures. Dependence/addiction is always possible with any medication. Tramadol typically is not recommended in cases of liver problems because the liver helps remove the medication from the body. Although not a narcotic or true opioid, there are some similarities. All opioids are very dangerous in persons with asthma or other lung disease, prostate problems, low blood pressure, head injury or increased intracranial pressure. Rare but serious side effects of opioid products include seizures, constipation requiring surgery, heart failure, and—in case of overdose—death. Side effects that are more common are: headache, nausea, constipation, dizziness, sweating, dry mouth, abdominal pain, and low blood pressure. Tramadol may work as a pain blocker and may have a very mild antidepressant benefit.

Dosing information

In the United States, tramadol is available as one of three preparations:

- (1) Ultram, a 50mg tramadol tablet, with a limit of 8 doses per day,
- (2) Ultracet, a combination of tramadol and acetaminophen, with a similar limit, and
- (3) Ultram ER, a long-acting preparation of tramadol, taken once per day. Ultram ER typically is taken as 100mg per day for 1 week, then, if needed and well tolerated, 200mg per day for 1 week, and then, if needed and well tolerated, 300mg per day. Studies suggest that if a patient uses more than 300mg per day, there is no additional benefit but there are additional side effects.

Important information

Disclaimer: This is for informational purposes only. This does not replace the instructions you received from your provider, does not constitute initiation of medical treatment or establishment of a patient-physician relationship, does not constitute any form of recommendation, prescription or medical advice, and does not imply that the medication is appropriate or FDA approved for any condition. This information is not a complete listing of instructions, doses, uses or side effects. If this was prescribed to you, you must review this information with your pharmacist and prescriber before starting the medication. Any medication may interfere with the ability to drive, concentrate or operate machinery; patients must be responsible for their own behavior and should not engage in any dangerous activity if there is any question of impairment. All medications have side effects and drug interactions, some serious, some fatal. Let all of your practitioners and pharmacists know about every substance used. Alcohol, herbals or illegal drugs are not considered safe with these medications. Assume no medication is safe during pregnancy or while breast feeding. The medication may interfere with birth control. Almost any medication can cause sleepiness, insomnia, dizziness, confusion, hallucinations, anxiety, panic, constipation or diarrhea, headache, chest pain and nausea or vomiting, among others. Most medications should NOT be stopped suddenly because of the risk of withdrawal.