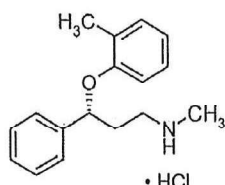


Atomoxetine (say: at-o-mocks-a-teen)

This leaflet is also available in 'Bionic Reading®' font (<https://bionic-reading.com>), which aids the ease of reading for people with dyslexia, ADHD or autistic spectrum, amongst others. Any feedback is most welcome.



What is atomoxetine?

- Atomoxetine (also called Strattera®) is used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD. ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- It is sometimes used along with methylphenidate or lisdexamfetamine
- It is available as capsules and a liquid (4mg in 1ml [20mg in 5ml], which is very sweet).

Many people with ADHD also have other symptoms e.g. Asperger's or Autistic Spectrum, and others. These other conditions do not improve with ADHD medicines. So, as ADHD symptoms improve, these other symptoms can become more noticeable e.g. being more sensitive to noise, touch, smells, tastes, or a need for routines. These are not 'new' symptoms and have always been there, but just masked by the ADHD, and are not medicine side effects. If other symptoms start appearing, it can be a good chance to work on ways to manage them (e.g. behavioural strategies).

Medicines are not a magic fix and will **not** solve all the problems, but they can be vital along with behavioural methods.

The ADHD Foundation have some great resources to help (www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/).

What is ADHD?

ADHD can cause you to:

- Be restless
- Get easily distracted
- Not finish things
- Get into trouble
- Do things without thinking first
- Not do well at school.
- For ADHD, about 1 in 2 (50%) of people's symptoms improve with atomoxetine over 3 months
- Carrying on for six months can improve that to about 65% (2 in 3 people)
- There are other options after that e.g. other medicines and therapies.



How does atomoxetine help?

- In ADHD, parts of the brain can take a bit longer to get going fully as you get older
- The 'frontal lobe' is one of those parts of the brain. It controls your 'drive'
- It uses dopamine and noradrenaline as two of its main chemical messengers
- If the frontal lobe isn't working fully you end up with not enough self-control
- Atomoxetine boosts the effects of noradrenaline, boosts attention and decreases hyperactivity. This helps you to be more 'in control' of yourself but atomoxetine is not a stimulant – it does not make you feel high
- Atomoxetine does not cure ADHD but can help calm down the symptoms
- This can help you to concentrate, help school, work, driving and help you get on with your life
- Having ADHD symptoms can hold you back and have a life-long effect on your schooling, qualifications, social skills, relationships, and jobs.



What is the usual dose of atomoxetine?



- The dose of atomoxetine mainly depends on your age and weight
- Age 6-18 and under 70kg – start at up to about 10-30mg a day, up to a maximum of 100mg a day
- Age 6-18 and over 70kg – start at up to about 40mg a day, up to 80mg a day
- Age over 18 years – start at 40mg a day up to about 80-100mg a day
- It is usually taken as a single dose in the morning or split up as morning and teatime/evening
- N.B. About 7% (1 in 15) people have a liver that doesn't break down atomoxetine as well as others (called a CYP2D6 slow metaboliser) and they get lots of side effects
- If this happens, the dose should be reduced and only taken once a day.

Important message: It can take a while to find the 'Sweet spot' i.e. the right dose, right times, and the right product for you and your life (also called the "Goldilocks" dose i.e. not too low, not too high). So, please do not give up too early or quickly. It's really worth making the effort to stick with it to get the best effect and least side effects.

How and when should I take atomoxetine?

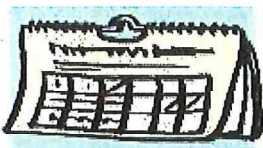


- Atomoxetine is best taken with food
- Swallow the capsules with at least half a glass of water while sitting or standing so they reach your stomach and do not stick in your throat
- Take your atomoxetine as directed on the medicine label. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember
- If the label says to only take it once a day this is usually best in the morning
- If the label says twice a day, then take it in the morning, and then late afternoon or early evening
- For the liquids, read the leaflet that comes with the bottle on how to use the oral syringe. The liquids should not be mixed with water or food.



How long will I have to wait before it works?

- It normally takes about a week to start to work for ADHD
- It may then take up to 2-3 months, or even longer, for the full effect.



How long will I need to keep taking atomoxetine for?

- It probably works much better if taken regularly for at least 2 years
- You may not need atomoxetine for ever
- Talk to your doctor about this every year or so.



Is atomoxetine addictive?

- Some people without ADHD abuse stimulants such as methylphenidate and lisdexamfetamine, but this is not common in people with ADHD
- Atomoxetine is not a stimulant and has been shown to have almost no addiction or abuse potential.



Can I stop taking atomoxetine suddenly?

- It is best not to do this. Talk it over first with other people e.g. relatives and your prescriber or other healthcare professional
- It normally works out better if you stop medication in a planned way at a time when your stress levels are low, rather than e.g. around exam times, mid-winter and life events
- You can stop taking atomoxetine, even suddenly, but gently reducing the dose might be best.



What should I do if I forget to take a dose of atomoxetine at the right time?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 4 hours of your next dose
- If you remember after this time, just take the next dose as normal
- Do not catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects.



Can I cycle or drive while I am taking atomoxetine?

- You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking atomoxetine
- Until this wears off, or you know how atomoxetine affects you, be careful cycling and do not drive or operate machines
- Atomoxetine can help you concentrate and so you may be less likely to have an accident but only if you take your atomoxetine regularly.

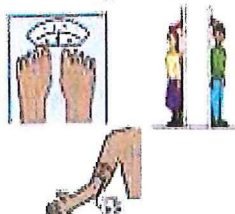
The UK driving rules are that as long as atomoxetine is prescribed for you by a doctor, you take it as prescribed, and are sure that it does not harm your driving then you are legal to drive (for more details go to www.gov.uk/adhd-and-driving).



What about becoming pregnant while taking atomoxetine?

- Discuss this with your health professional
 - There are leaflets to help give you the information you need to make a choice
 - Usually, people gradually reduce their dose before trying to get pregnant
- If you find yourself pregnant unexpectedly do not panic, see your health professional as soon as possible.

**weight, height,
blood pressure**



Will I need any tests or monitoring while I am taking atomoxetine?

- Yes, you should have some tests just to be on the safe side
- Before you start atomoxetine, and every 6 months, we may check your height and weight, heart rate (possibly also an ECG), blood pressure
- You will also be asked about how well you are getting on with atomoxetine e.g. if your sleep or behaviour has changed, and any side effects.

What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking atomoxetine?

Very common (more than about 1 in 10 people might get these)	
 Not feeling hungry: - You will usually get your appetite back in a few weeks - If not, let your prescriber know next time you meet.	 Feeling sick or being sick, or stomach or chest pain: - Taking it after food may help - It usually wears off in a few weeks - If not, tell your prescriber.
can't sleep  Insomnia: - Having trouble getting off to sleep or staying asleep - Talk to your prescriber when you next see them - You may be able to adjust the timing of the dose.	 Dizziness: - Feeling light-headed and faint - Don't stand up too quickly - Try to lie down or sit down if you feel it coming on - Don't drive or cycle.
Common (fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)	
 Fatigue and sleepiness: - You feel tired or sleepy all the time, often early on and usually wears off - If you get this for more than a week after starting, tell your prescriber - It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.	constipation  Constipation: - When you want to poop but can't - Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereals or fruit and drink enough fluid, and keep active - If this does not help, ask your prescriber or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
See your prescriber if you get any of these rare side effects:	
jaundice  Jaundice: - Pain just under the ribs, skin looking a bit yellow, and feeling sick - Stop taking atomoxetine and contact your prescriber straight away.	rash  Rash: - This can be a rash or itching seen anywhere on the skin - If this happens, stop taking your atomoxetine and contact your prescriber in the next day.
 Anger or aggression: - Unexpected feelings of being angry, aggressive, irritable or low, or feel you want to harm yourself - Tell your prescriber as soon as possible.	

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think you might have a side effect, you should ask your prescriber, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about atomoxetine. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. The 'Handy charts' will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions.

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