

# AMIODARONE

**Other names:** Cordarone X®, Aratac®



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## Why are you taking this medicine?

Amiodarone belongs to the group of medicines known as **antiarrhythmics**.

Amiodarone is used to treat arrhythmias of the heart. An arrhythmia is an abnormal heartbeat, which means that the heart can either be beating too fast, too slowly or irregularly. Amiodarone works by correcting a fast heartbeat to a normal rhythm.

## When to take this medicine

- Take amiodarone exactly as directed by your doctor or pharmacist
- Swallow whole with a glass of water
- Do not stop taking this medicine, even if you begin to feel better, without speaking to your doctor first. Stopping treatment may cause your symptoms to return
- Try to take at the same times each day to avoid missing any doses
- Amiodarone lasts for a very long time in the body, therefore it is usual to start with a high dose and then reduce over a number of weeks to a low maintenance dose

**Please check with your doctor/pharmacist if your starting dose is not reduced**

## If you miss a dose

Take your dose as soon as possible except when it is close to the time for your next dose. If it is almost time for next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular dosing schedule. You should not take two doses at the same time.

## Side effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Call your doctor **immediately** if you experience any of the following side effects:

- altered or blurred vision
- feeling tired, lethargic or feeling the cold
- feeling hot, sweaty and restless for no apparent reason
- shortness of breath
- changes to heartbeat such as pounding heart, very rapid or very slow beat

Tell with your pharmacist or doctor if any of the following occur:

- metallic taste in the mouth
- skin discolouration (e.g. a grey-blue colour)
- loss of weight or appetite
- nausea/vomiting
- nightmares and sleeping difficulties

Skin Photosensitivity:

- Amiodarone increases your skin's sensitivity to sunlight, which may cause it to burn more easily. You should try to avoid exposure to the sun and sun beds
- Always wear a sunhat, protective clothing and sun block lotion (SPF 30 plus) when going out in the sun
- Your skin may still continue to be sensitive to sunlight for several months after you have stopped taking this medicine

### **Other medicines**

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Careful monitoring of amiodarone is required by your doctor or pharmacist when taking other medication, for example:

- Warfarin (anticoagulant) – can increase the INR (International Normalised Ratio) with an increased risk of bleeding
- Digoxin – the blood level of digoxin can increase requiring a decreased dose of digoxin
- Statins (e.g. atorvastatin or simvastatin - cholesterol lowering medicine) may cause muscle pain. Check with your doctor if this occurs
- Antiepileptic medication (e.g. phenytoin) can increase the phenytoin level in the body. A reduced dose of phenytoin may be required
- Dabigatran – can increase the risk of bleeding

### **Note:**

You will need to have regular a blood test (every six months) and chest x-ray (every year) while you are taking amiodarone to monitor for side effects. Please attend all your doctor's appointments.

### **Storage**

Keep all medicines out of reach of children.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.**