

NEFAZODONE ('Dutonin')

Nef - az - o - done

Why have I been prescribed nefazodone?

Nefazodone is used to treat depression. It is an antidepressant. Depression is a common condition. It is different from the normal "ups and downs" of everyday life. People with depression may feel sad most of the time and cannot see an end to their sadness. Tiredness and poor sleep are very common, and so are changes in appetite. Many people find that they simply cannot enjoy any of life's pleasures.

Depression can be treated in many ways. Certain "talking" therapies are also effective for some people. Antidepressants can generally be relied upon to relieve the symptoms of depression in most people.

What exactly is nefazodone?

Nefazodone is a relatively new kind of antidepressant. It is not a tranquilliser or sleeping tablet, although if you take it at night, it may help you sleep. The trade or brand name of nefazodone is '*Dutonin*'.

Is nefazodone safe to take?

It is usually safe to have nefazodone regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but it doesn't suit everyone. Let your doctor know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you have epilepsy, diabetes, or suffer from heart, liver, or kidney trouble;
- b) if you are taking any other medication. This includes medicines bought from your pharmacist without a prescription, such as antihistamines and St. John's wort;
- c) if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

What is the usual dose of nefazodone?

The starting dose of nefazodone is usually 50mg twice a day. This is generally increased slowly to 200mg twice a day. The usual maximum dose of nefazodone is 300mg twice a day.

How should I take nefazodone?

Look at the label on your medicine; it should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow this advice carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. Most medicines are now dispensed with an information leaflet for you to read.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Never change your dose without checking with your doctor. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time.

Is nefazodone addictive?

Nefazodone is not addictive, although some people do get some "discontinuation" effects if they stop it suddenly. These effects include anxiety, dizziness, feeling sick and not being able to sleep. Some people feel confused and "out of sorts". These symptoms are less severe if you come off nefazodone slowly. It is best to discuss this with your doctor. Some people can get these symptoms just by missing one or two doses of nefazodone, although this is rare.

What will happen to me when I start taking nefazodone?

All antidepressants work slowly. People tend to feel better over a period of weeks rather than days. Different symptoms may get better at different times. Most people find that they feel noticeably better after about two or three weeks. However, the full effect of antidepressants is usually felt only after about four to six weeks. It is very important to continue to take antidepressants so that the full effects can be felt. Speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you have any questions about this.

Unfortunately, you might get some side effects before you start to feel any better. Most side effects should go away after a few weeks. Look at the table over the page. It tells you what to do if you get any side effects. Not everyone will get the side

effects shown. There are many other possible side effects. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.

| Side effect | What is it? | What should I do if it happens to me? |
|----------------------|---|--|
| COMMON | | |
| DIZZINESS | Feeling light headed | This should wear off with time. If it is bad, contact your doctor. |
| DROWSINESS | Feeling sleepy or sluggish. It can last for a few hours after taking your dose. | Don't drive or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take your nefazodone at a different time. The drowsiness may wear off with time. |
| DRY MOUTH | Not much saliva or spit. | Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits usually helps. If not, your doctor can give you a mouth spray. A change in medicine or dose may be possible. |
| NAUSEA | Feeling sick. | Taking each dose with or after food may help. If it is bad, contact your doctor. |
| UNCOMMON | | |
| ABNORMAL DREAMS | Dreams that you don't usually have. Your dreams may be more vivid. | If they are really bad, see your doctor. |
| CONSTIPATION | Feeling "bunged up" inside. You can't pass a motion. | Eat more fibre (bran, fruit, vegetables). Do more walking. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative. |
| FEVER | A high temperature. | It should be safe to take aspirin or paracetamol. |
| POSTURAL HYPOTENSION | A low blood pressure. You may feel faint when you stand up. | Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive. This dizziness is not dangerous |
| VISUAL DISTURBANCES | When you look away from an object you may see a "trail". | Don't drive. This should wear off with time. See your doctor if you are worried. |
| RARE | | |
| SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION | No desire to have sex. Difficulty in reaching orgasm. | Nefazodone is unlikely to affect your sexual function. If you are having such problems, contact your doctor |

What about alcohol?

It is officially recommended that people taking nefazodone should not drink alcohol. This is because both nefazodone and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken at the same time, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls or accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol often makes depression worse. Excessive drinking is especially likely to do this.

Once people are used to taking medication, they can sometimes drink alcohol in small amounts without any harm. Avoid alcohol altogether for the first one or two months. After this, if you want a drink, try a glass of your normal drink and see how you feel. If this doesn't make you feel drowsy, then it is probably OK to drink small amounts. It pays to be very cautious because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication.

Don't stop taking your medication because you fancy a drink at the weekend. If you do drink alcohol, drink only small amounts. Never drink any alcohol and drive while on nefazodone. Discuss any concerns you may have with your pharmacist, nurse or doctor.

When I feel better, can I stop taking nefazodone?

No. If you stop taking nefazodone, your original symptoms may return. To reduce your chances of becoming depressed again, you may need to take your antidepressant for at least 6 months after you feel better, and sometimes longer. This is not thought to be harmful. You should decide with your doctor when you can come off it.

Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may find other books or leaflets also useful. If you have access to the internet you may find a lot of information there as well, but be careful, as internet based information is not always accurate.



© 2001 United Kingdom Psychiatric Pharmacy Group www.ukppg.org.uk

This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. It is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet. For more information call the UKPPG National Telephone Helpline, 11am to 5pm, Monday to Friday on 020 7919 2999 or visit www.nmhct.nhs.uk/pharmacy

This leaflet has been supplied by:

Name
Address
Address
Telephone Number