

Patient information Sheet for Triptans

Triptans are a family of drugs that act on the specific pathway in the migraine mechanism. The family includes Imigran (Sumatriptan), Zomig (Zolmitriptan), Almogran (Almotriptan), Naramig (Naratriptan), Maxalt (Rizatriptan) and Migard (Frovatriptan). They all differ in their rate of onset, duration of action and side effects. If one Triptan doesn't work or gives unacceptable side effects, there is a good chance another will be successful.

They are all available in tablet form but for some preparations are available in injection form or nasal spray when absorption may be a problem with vomiting. Preparations that are available in wafer or melt forms are for convenience only as they melt in the mouth and do not get absorbed quicker than tablets.

When should they be taken?

As early as possible in the attack when you are sure it is migraine. In many people, Triptans may not work if taken during an aura.

How soon can I take another tablet?

A second tablet can be taken after 2 hours if there is a response to the first dose. Patients who fail to respond to the initial tablet should not take a second dose for the same attack.

What are the main side effects?

A wide range of side effects are listed but the main concern is chest pain. However, the source of this pain has not yet been fully established.

How many times a week can I take them?

If Triptans are taken too frequently there is a danger that they can cause overuse headache. If you are taking more than 2-3 Triptans a week then you should discuss further options with your GP.

Are there any conditions where they shouldn't be taken?

Triptans should not be taken if you have a history of diseases of the arteries. This includes heart disease, stroke or uncontrolled blood pressure.

Pregnancy and breast-feeding

If you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, discuss this with your GP.

Over 65 years of age

Triptans are not licenced for people over 65 years of age. This is because Triptans can constrict blood vessels which may already be compromised as we get older. However, if Triptans are important to the quality of your life and you have found no satisfactory alternative you may wish to discuss this further with your GP if you have no history of vascular disease.

This leaflet is intended to provide a brief overview of aspects of this treatment protocol. It is not intended as a substitute for the comprehensive 'product information' leaflet found inside all boxes of medication. The 'product information' leaflet should always be read before taking medication.

Your prescribing doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of the medication as it relates to you and answer any further questions you may have.