

# Venlafaxine

(Ven – la – fax – een)

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## How this medication is used

Venlafaxine is often used to treat neuropathic pain. This is pain from nerve injuries that feels sharp and burning. It is also used to treat fibromyalgia. It also helps to improve mood and is used to treat depression or anxiety. This medication helps to balance chemicals in the brain.

## Reminders

- This medication can increase your blood pressure. Talk with your doctor about taking your blood pressure.
- If you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of taking this medication.
- Tell your doctor if you are taking antidepressant medications, particularly MAO inhibitors, such as phenelzine, tranylcypromine, moclobemide or selegiline within the past 2 weeks.
- Do not stop this medication without talking to your doctor first. Sudden stopping of this medication can cause severe headache, poor sleep, nausea, panic attack and agitation. When it is time to stop taking this medication your doctor may slowly decrease the amount you take.

## How to take this medication

- Venlafaxine is usually started at a low dose and slowly increased. It may take some time before you get the full effect of this medication.
- Take this medication exactly as directed by your doctor at the same time each day.
- To avoid stomach upset, take this medication with food.
- If this medication makes you sleepy, take it in the evening. If it makes you active, take it in the morning.
- If you miss a dose of this medication, do not worry. Do not take the missed dose. Keep on your regular schedule.
- **Capsules:** Swallow whole with a full glass of water. Do not crush or chew capsules. You may sprinkle the contents of the capsule onto food such as applesauce. If you do this, make sure you eat all of the food.

## While taking this medication you may notice

- **A dry mouth.** Suck on ice chips, sugar-free candy or chew sugar-free gum. Good care of your teeth is very important at this time.
- **Dizziness.** Get up slowly when you have been sitting or lying down. If you feel dizzy, sit or lie down until you are no longer dizzy, then get up slowly.
- **Drowsiness.** Until you know how it affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.
- **Increased effects of alcohol.** Making you more sleepy, dizzy and lightheaded. Do not drink alcohol (wine, beer and liquor) while on this medication.
- **Nausea or upset stomach.** Take with food.
- **Trouble with sleeping.**
- **Constipation.** To prevent constipation, eat food high in fibre, drink plenty of fluids (6 to 8 glasses) each day and exercise regularly. Food high in fibre includes whole grain products, vegetables and fruit. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about laxatives or stool softeners.
- **Headache.**
- **Nervousness.**
- **increased sweating.**
- **Feeling weak or tired.**
- **Loss of appetite.**

Most of these effects will go away as your body gets used to the medication. If not, contact your doctor.

## Contact your doctor or seek medical help if you notice

- skin rash or itchy skin
- restless and excited feelings
- sexuality changes
- increase in blood pressure
- behavioural or emotional changes, including thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- trouble passing urine