

Nitrates

Information for Patients

**Nitrates is the name given to a group of medicines.
The name of your nitrate is**

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Why has my doctor given me a nitrate?

Nitrates can be used for various illnesses.

They are often used to treat the chest pain of an angina attack (either as Glyceryl trinitrate tablets or spray) or to prevent an angina attack.

Check with your doctor if you are still not sure why you need a nitrate.

How do they work?

Angina pain is caused when the amount of oxygen being supplied to the heart muscle isn't enough to enable it to carry out the amount of work you are asking it to do.

Nitrates work by opening up the blood vessels leading to the heart. This increases the blood supply to the heart supplying more oxygen and therefore preventing or stopping chest pain. Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN) tablets or spray work very quickly to reduce acute pain, whereas longer acting tablets such as isosorbide mononitrate work steadily to prevent attacks of angina.

How should I take my nitrate?

Always follow the instructions on the label. GTN tablets must be placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve. If you use the spray, one or two puffs should be sprayed under the tongue. If after five minutes the chest pain has not gone, place another tablet, or spray another dose, under the tongue. If after taking three doses in less than fifteen minutes the pain has not gone, call an ambulance.

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If you do not use the tablets within 8 weeks of first opening the bottle, obtain a fresh supply and return the old tablets to your pharmacist for disposal.

The following can occur in some people:-

- headaches, however, these usually stop after a few days when the body adjusts to the tablets
- flushing
- nausea
- dizziness
- tachycardia

When you start to take nitrates you should not drive or operate machinery until you know that your ability is not affected by the tablets.

Can I take other medicines while taking nitrates?

Yes, but some other medicines may affect how your nitrate works. It is important that you check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines including ones that you buy over the counter.

This leaflet is not intended as a substitute for any advice that your doctor, nurse or pharmacist may give you.

More detailed information can be obtained from the manufacturers information leaflet.

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