

Approvals:

Cardiology SDU: 26.4.18

Divisional Board: Approved August 18

Clinical Guidelines Subgroup:10.10.18

Equality Impact Assessment:22.5.18

Communications Advisory Panel: April 2019

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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Issue date: April 2019

Review date: April 2021

Leaflet code: WZZ-

Version: 1.0

Amiodarone therapy

Patient information leaflet

If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please call PALS on 01296 316042

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

Introduction

You have started on, or have been advised to take a medicine called Amiodarone, which is why you have been given this information booklet. A healthcare professional will go through this information with you and answer any questions that you or your carer might have. The aim of this booklet is to provide you with information regarding the safe use and monitoring of Amiodarone. In addition to this information booklet, always make sure that you read the manufacturer's drug information leaflet.

Please complete your personal information or insert hospital ID sticker

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Contact number:

Hospital or NHS number:

Name of GP:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Name of specialist clinician managing Amiodarone treatment:

Date treatment commenced:

Reason for treatment:

Expected duration of treatment:

Side Effects

Other Medication : Amiodarone is known to interact with a number of other drugs including herbal supplements and some over the counter medication. Always let your GP, pharmacist and health care provider know that you are taking Amiodarone and seek advice before taking any over the counter medicines or herbal supplements such as St John's Wort. Grapefruit Juice should be avoided whilst taking Amiodarone. If in doubt please speak to your local pharmacist.

Amiodarone frequently interacts with Warfarin, particularly at the start of treatment which can result in increases to your INR. If you take Warfarin it is very important that you get your INR checked more frequently and let your INR clinic know that you have been commenced on Amiodarone immediately. We recommend that your INR is checked at least twice weekly in the first 2 weeks of starting Amiodarone.

Additional effects: For some people, it is possible, that Amiodarone can change the way things taste, cause shakiness, nightmares and sometimes difficulties sleeping.

This leaflet explains some of the most common side-effects that some people may experience. However, it is not comprehensive. If you experience other side-effects and want to ask anything else related to your treatment please contact either the specialist in charge of your care, general practitioner or local pharmacist for further advice.

We continually strive to improve the quality of information given to patients. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this information booklet, please contact :

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Side Effects

Eyes: Small unharmed deposits can form in the cornea of the eye. Sometimes however, you may notice these deposits when looking at bright lights particularly at night e.g. whilst driving you may notice a bluish halo. If you experience blurred vision you must **not** drive or operate machinery.

Lungs: Amiodarone can occasionally cause thickening (fibrosis) of the lung tissue. If you notice any changes in your breathing such as shortness of breath you should see your general practitioner or hospital specialist for advice.

Heart: Sometimes Amiodarone can slow the heart rate too much (bradycardia). Bradycardia can result in tiredness and dizziness. If you notice these symptoms or have concerns see your general practitioner or hospital specialist for advice.

Liver: On occasion, although quite rare, Amiodarone can impact on normal liver function requiring a change in dose or discontinuation of treatment. Whilst taking Amiodarone, routine blood tests at 6-monthly intervals should be carried out to assess liver function. If you notice yellow discoloration of the skin or eyes then contact your general practitioner or hospital specialist for advice.

Thyroid: The thyroid gland produces hormones that regulate the body's metabolic rate as well as heart, digestive function and bone maintenance. Amiodarone contains iodine which can cause changes in the thyroid function such as making the thyroid overactive or underactive (this occurs in less than 1:10 of patients). Overactive and underactive thyroid function can be treated with medication but your Amiodarone may need to be stopped in some cases. Your doctor will monitor your thyroid function with 6 monthly blood tests whilst taking Amiodarone. Should you develop symptoms of extreme tiredness, nervousness, anxiety or hair loss you should seek a review with your general practitioner or hospital specialist.

Treatment with Amiodarone

Amiodarone belongs to a group of drugs known as antiarrhythmics and is used to control abnormal heart rhythms such as an irregular or fast heart rate. Abnormal heart rhythms such as atrial fibrillation, ventricular tachycardia and atrial flutter can be treated using Amiodarone.

Amiodarone is used to keep the heart in its normal rhythm. It is also used when the heart has gone out of rhythm to help it return to normal.

Before taking Amiodarone make sure that the person prescribing it knows if you:

- have a history of thyroid problems
- have an allergy to Amiodarone or Iodine
- are pregnant, breast feeding or planning a pregnancy
- have a slow pulse or suffer with episodes of dizziness
- suffer with liver or kidney problems

Commencing Amiodarone

Amiodarone is usually recommended by a Cardiologist (heart specialist) or an Electrophysiologist (heart specialist who has a particular interest in abnormal heart rhythms). Prior to starting Amiodarone it is normal to have some tests which will include blood tests to assess how well your liver, thyroid gland and kidneys are working and to ensure that Amiodarone is suitable for you to take. Both your specialist team and your GP will be involved in the initiation of treatment and ongoing monitoring whilst taking Amiodarone. Amiodarone can be a long-term treatment or given for a shorter period of time (3-12 months). During the treatment period you will need to be reviewed by your general practitioner and/or specialist team.

Commencing Amiodarone

Initial tests undertaken by your **specialist**

Test	Date
Chest X-ray, pulmonary function test (PFTs) or chest auscultation	
ECG, blood pressure & pulse	
Liver function tests	
Thyroid function tests	
Urea and electrolytes (U&Es)	

Ongoing tests undertaken by **GP**

Test	Date
Liver function tests (6 monthly)	
U&Es (6 monthly)	
Thyroid function tests (6 monthly)	
Chest X-ray or PFTs or chest auscultation (12 monthly)	

Dose

A high dose (loading dose) of Amiodarone is initially prescribed because uptake of the drug through the (stomach and intestines) gastrointestinal tract is slow – it can take a long time to reach its full (therapeutic) effect. The dose will normally be reduced to one daily 200mg tablet after two weeks of starting treatment.

Standard loading consists of:

Week 1: One 200mg tablet three times a day for 7 days;

Week 2: One 200mg tablet twice a day for 7 days;

Week 3: One 200mg tablet once daily thereafter

Where possible try to take your tablets at about the same time each day. Amiodarone should be swallowed whole. If you miss a dose of Amiodarone, take the missed dose as soon as possible. If you are nearing your next prescribed dose, skip the missed dose and take the next one as scheduled. Do **not** take two doses at the same time. If you are unsure what to do then contact your local pharmacist. Do **not** stop taking your tablets without talking to your general practitioner or hospital specialist.

Possible side effects

Amiodarone is often well tolerated although it can have side effects which affect different parts of the body - the potential side effects are listed below. Although many of the side effects occur in less than 1:10 people it does mean that continued monitoring whilst taking Amiodarone is important.

Skin: Amiodarone can make your skin more sensitive to sunburn. Using sun block and wearing protective clothing such as a sun hat can help to prevent this. Amiodarone can remain in the body for approximately 2 months after it has been stopped so it may be necessary to continue use of sun precautions after you have stopped taking it for a few months. Amiodarone can occasionally result in the skin looking slightly grey or having a bluish tinge to it. This often reverses on stopping the medication but can take some time.