

Atomoxetine (pron. at-o-mocks-e-teen)

What is atomoxetine used for?

Atomoxetine (also known as Strattera[®]) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). It is available as capsules. ADHD can cause you to be easily distracted, not finishing things, getting into trouble, having driving accidents and having relationship problems.

What is the usual dose of atomoxetine?

The usual dose of atomoxetine in adults is around 80mg a day, but may be higher in some people.

How should I take atomoxetine?

Swallow the capsules with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

When should I take atomoxetine?

Take your atomoxetine as directed on the medicine label. Try to take it at regular times each day. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as it is best taken with food. If the label says to only take it once a day this is usually best in the morning. If the label says twice a day then take it in the morning and then late afternoon or early evening.

What are the alternatives to atomoxetine?

There are many other medicines (e.g. methylphenidate), talking therapies and treatments for ADHD. See our "Handy chart" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will atomoxetine take to work?

It should start to work in about a month, and the effect builds over the next few months. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will I need to keep taking atomoxetine for?

You will usually need to keep taking atomoxetine for several years. You should talk to your doctor about this every year or so. Please see our "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

Is atomoxetine addictive?

Atomoxetine is not a stimulant and not addictive as such.

Can I stop taking atomoxetine suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if you feel fine. Your ADHD symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after atomoxetine has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw atomoxetine by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of atomoxetine?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 4-6 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects. If you have problems remembering your doses (as very many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs that can be used to help you.

Will atomoxetine affect my other medication?

Atomoxetine has a few interactions with other medicines:

- Atomoxetine should not be used with MAOIs (a type of antidepressant)
- Other antidepressants such as imipramine, venlafaxine and mirtazapine should be used with care
- Decongestants that can be bought over the counter such as pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine (often found in cold remedies) should not be taken without consulting your pharmacist or doctor
- Atomoxetine may interact with salbutamol tablets (for asthma), but not usually with salbutamol inhalers
- Atomoxetine can increase blood pressure, so other medicines that increase blood pressure should be taken with care.
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and atomoxetine.

Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking atomoxetine?

You should have no problems with an occasional alcoholic drink.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking atomoxetine?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from atomoxetine.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Anorexia	Weight loss, not feeling hungry.	If this is a problem, contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick. Abdominal pain	If it is bad, contact your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose. Taking it after food may help. It should wear off after a few weeks.
Increased alertness	Early morning waking. Irritability and mood swings	Discuss this with your doctor. You may be able to change the time of your dose or doses.
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. You may be able to change the time of your dose or doses.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint	Do not stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Do not drive.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Constipation	When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). You can't pass a motion.	Make sure you eat enough fibre or bran or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid. Make sure you keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
Skin rashes	Red rashes on the skin, dermatitis, pruritis (itching)	You should stop atomoxetine and call your doctor or hospital immediately if you get swelling or hives (small raised, itchy patches of skin). Atomoxetine can cause a serious allergic reaction in rare cases.
Fatigue	You feel tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting atomoxetine, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.
RARE (<i>less than about 1 in 1000 people might get these</i>)		
Sexual dysfunction	Finding it hard to have an orgasm. No desire for sex.	Discuss with your doctor.
Aggression	Being aggressive, depressed, hostile and perhaps suicidal thinking.	If this occurs, discuss with your doctor as soon as possible.
Jaundice and hepatic damage	Pain just under the ribs, looking a bit yellow, feeling sick	Stop taking atomoxetine and contact your doctor straight away, don't delay.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

Will I need a blood test if I am taking atomoxetine?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking atomoxetine.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking atomoxetine?

You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking atomoxetine. Until this wears off, or you know how atomoxetine affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.