

Tramadol

To relieve pain



Your doctor has prescribed tramadol for pain relief. It is an analgesic opioid that is similar to an antidepressant. It is used to treat mild to moderate pain.

How is this medication taken?

Tramadol is available in tablets to swallow.

There are two formulas:

- short-acting: tramadol (Ultram) and tramadol with acetaminophen (Tramacet)
- long-acting: Durela, Ralivia, Tridural, and Zytram XL

Short-acting tablets are taken every 4 to 6 hours as needed. Doses vary from patient to patient. Long-acting tablets are taken every 24 hours. It is important to take your medication at the dose and time indicated by your doctor.

If you have been taking a short-acting opioid regularly for at least 2 or 3 weeks, **don't stop it from one day to the next**. Otherwise, you may experience withdrawal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, tremors, chills, etc.). This medication must be stopped gradually. Talk with your doctor about it first.

How long does the treatment go on?

It depends on your condition. If the pain is very severe, the treatment lasts a few days or weeks. In the case of persistent pain, treatment may go on for months or years. Tramadol is taken alone or with other medications to relieve pain.

Patients who receive a tramadol prescription commit to a therapeutic contract.

Here are the rules to follow:

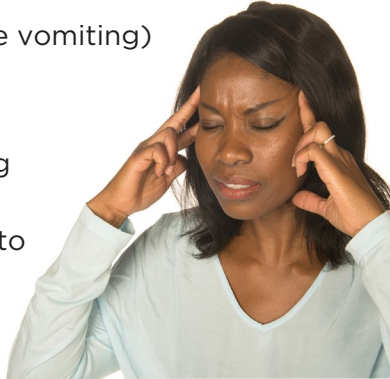
- > respect the prescribed doses
- > get your prescription from only one doctor
- > buy all your medications from the same pharmacy (of your choice)



What are the side effects?

Tramadol can cause certain side effects. Many of them are temporary. The main ones are:

- constipation
- nausea (feeling like vomiting)
- headaches
- dizziness
- drowsiness (feeling sleepy)
- itchiness (an urge to scratch)
- dry mouth



If you experience side effects, and if these worry you, are persistent, or get worse, tell your doctor or a health professional as soon as possible.

The side effects are not serious, but sometimes they're uncomfortable.

Here are some tips to guide you:

- > **Constipation:** Your doctor may prescribe a drug to soften stools with a laxative. Unless contraindicated, drink 6 to 8 glasses of liquid per day, try to stay active, and eat high-fibre foods. It's better to prevent constipation before it sets in.
- > **Nausea:** Eat little, but often. If necessary, take over-the-counter nausea medication such as Gravol (dimenhydrinate), either in tablet or suppository form. Nausea often goes away after a few days.
- > **Drowsiness:** Usually, drowsiness disappears gradually. If it persists or is very strong, tell your doctor or pharmacist without delay. During the first few days of treatment, take care and see how you react.

- > **Itchiness:** Apply a fresh wet towel to the skin. You can take a bath with colloidal oatmeal (in fine powder), apply a menthol-based cream, or use an antihistamine (this product can, however, cause drowsiness). Ask your pharmacist for help.



Tell your doctor if you have epilepsy. Tramadol may increase the risk of seizures.

Also tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney failure. He or she will be able to guide you.

Could I become addicted to tramadol?

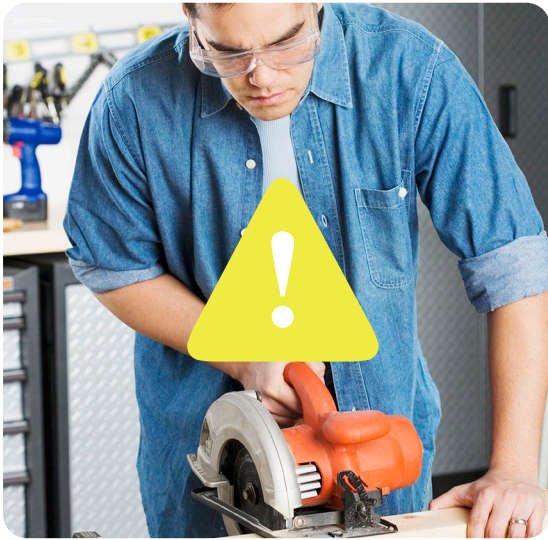
If you take it as prescribed to relieve pain, there is little risk that tramadol will be a problem. It's important to distinguish between dependence and misuse.

- > **Physical dependence:** If you stop taking the medication all at once, you may experience symptoms such as chills, tremors, anxiety, nausea or stomach cramps. To reduce this risk, doses can be gradually reduced. If necessary, your doctor will adjust the medication.
- > **Misuse:** If you feel you're taking it for any reason other than pain relief (for instance, to relax, to help you sleep), it's very important to discuss this with your doctor.

If you have ever had a problem with overuse (regardless of the substance, including alcohol), report it to your doctor. He or she will be better able to help you and ensure the treatment is safe for you.

Can I drink alcohol during the treatment?

Alcohol can intensify the effects of tramadol on the brain. That's why it's advisable to **avoid or limit** the intake of alcohol (and drinks containing it) while you're under the influence of this medication. **But be careful:** don't suddenly stop this treatment because you intend to drink alcohol (for example, during a night out).



Can I drive and do manual labour during the treatment?

Tramadol can cause drowsiness. You may have difficulty driving a vehicle or using certain tools.

Before driving again or operating dangerous tools, make sure you're functional and fully awake.

Be vigilant at the beginning of treatment and at each dose change. In the eyes of the law, you remain responsible for your actions.

Can I take tramadol while pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, or planning a pregnancy, tell your doctor. Tramadol increases the risk of miscarriage. Also, if you take it during your pregnancy, your baby could have withdrawal symptoms at birth.

What happens if I take other medications or natural products?

Before taking any other product, it's always best to talk to your doctor or pharmacist. He or she will make sure to avoid interactions, either by changing the times you take it or by offering you another product.

Some drugs or natural products may change the effect of tramadol. They can intensify or diminish it. For example, any drug that causes drowsiness can increase the drowsiness effect of tramadol.

Also, Tramacet contains acetaminophen. **Be careful not to exceed the maximum daily dose of acetaminophen** if you're taking other products that containing (such as Tylenol). This can cause liver damage. The maximum is 4 grams (4,000 milligrams) per day, or 12 tablets of regular acetaminophen (Tylenol or other brand) (325 mg). This maximum may be lower for some people.

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

Take it as soon as possible. However, if it's almost time for the next dose, wait until the usual time.

Don't double the dose.

Where should I store my medication?



Store it in a safe place, away from children. Medications are sensitive to heat and humidity. Don't store them in the kitchen or bathroom.

What should I do in the case of an emergency or overdose?

Important: Overdose is relatively rare with this drug. Overdose causes, among other things, respiratory depression, with difficult, slow, or irregular breathing.

However, if you are getting more and more drowsy and the effect of the drug seems more intense than usual, call **9-1-1**. Have a family member or neighbour stay with you until emergency services arrive.



REMEMBER

You can manage your pain!

How? By doing:

- light activities
- progressive exercises
- relaxation techniques
- your favourite hobbies and pastimes



Eat well to maintain a healthy weight. Sleep enough to feel rested. Take your medications as prescribed.



For your health and that of your loved ones, never take someone else's medication and never share yours. Bring any leftover doses back to the pharmacy.



Who can I contact if I have questions?

Ask your pharmacist or nurse. Otherwise, ask your doctor at your next appointment.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Québec Association of Chronic Pain:
> douleurchronique.org

Canadian Pain Society:
> canadianpainsociety.ca

Société Française d'Étude et de Traitement de la Douleur:
> sfetd-douleur.org

International Association for the Study of Pain:
> iasp-pain.org

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website
chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

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