



Triptans for migraine and headache

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with any patient information leaflet provided by the manufacturer.

This information sheet describes the group of medicines called triptans, how they can be used and some of the possible side effects. Each person reacts differently to medicines so your child will not necessarily suffer every side effect mentioned. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist or telephone one of the numbers on this information sheet.

What are triptans?

Triptans are a group of medicines used to treat migraine or headache. They are also known as 5HT₁-receptor agonists, which refer to the particular substance in the brain (5HT_{1B/1D} or serotonin) on which the medicines act. They do not prevent migraine or headache but they act on the pain once a migraine or headache has developed.

There are several medicines in the triptan group including:

- Sumatriptan (available under the brand name Imigran®)
- Zolmitriptan (Zomig®)
- Rizatriptan (Maxalt®)

If one triptan does not work or causes side effects, your doctor will suggest another.

Some types of triptan are not licensed for use in children. Medicines are often used 'off licence' in children for a number of reasons for example limited data available for a specific use in children. This is not necessarily hazardous but should be explained and agreed before use. Your doctor will explain this further to you.

How are they given?

Triptans should be given as soon as a migraine or headache develops, while it is still mild to moderate. In many people, triptans do not work if taken during a migraine aura. Follow the instructions on the packet for the maximum dose per attack and in a week.

Triptans come in various formats.

- **Tablets to be taken whole by mouth**
 - Sumatriptan, Zolmitriptan and Rizatriptan

Give to your child with plenty of water. If possible, they should swallow the tablet whole – for further information on giving your child tablets, see our information sheet available online at www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-conditions/medicines-information/how-to-give-your-child-tablets-or-capsules or our short video film at www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-conditions/medicines-information/how-to-give-your-child-tablets-or-capsules/video-how-to-give-your-child-tablets-or-capsules



■ **Tablets to be melted on the tongue**

– Zolmitriptan and Rizatriptan

Give to your child to place on their tongue while the tablet slowly dissolves. They may want a drink of water afterwards.

■ **Injection under the skin**

(subcutaneously or SC) – Sumatriptan

We will show you how to give a subcutaneous injection. You can also read our information sheet available online at www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-conditions/medicines-information/giving-subcutaneous-injections to remind you.

■ **Nasal spray** – Sumatriptan and Zolmitriptan

Ask your child to lean slightly forwards and spray a single dose inside one nostril. Unlike an inhaler, they do not need to take a deep breath after the spray. For further information, see our information sheet available online at www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-conditions/medicines-information/how-to-give-your-child-nose-drops-or-spray or our short video film at www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-conditions/medicines-information/how-to-give-your-child-nose-drops-or-spray/video-podcast-how-to-give-your-child-nose-drops-or-spray

Who should not take triptans?

People with the following conditions should discuss taking triptans with their doctor.

- Hypersensitivity to triptans or any of their ingredients
- Children aged under 12 years
- Existing liver problems
- Existing heart disease or uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Depression being treated with certain medicines such as fluoxetine or fluvoxamine

What are the side effects of triptans?

The following side effects have been reported. If your child experiences them, please discuss with your doctor or pharmacist.

- Chest pain
- Jaw, neck or chest pressure
- Skin irritation
- Numbness
- Nausea
- Flushing

The nasal spray format may cause a strange taste in the mouth or irritation of the nose and mouth.

If triptans are taken too often, they may cause an 'overuse' headache. If your child is taking triptans more than two or three times a week, discuss this with your doctor.



Triptans and other medicines

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving your child any other medicines, including herbal or complementary medicines.

- Other pain relief medicines such as paracetamol and ibuprofen can be taken 30 to 60 minutes before a triptan medicine.
- Certain antibacterials, such as erythromycin, clarithromycin and ciprofloxacin
- Certain antifungals, such as itraconazole or ketoconazole
- Certain antivirals, such as indinavir, nelfinavir and ritonavir

Important information

- **Keep medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.**
- **The medicine should be kept in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight and heat.**
- **If your doctor decides to stop treatment or the medicine passes its expiry date, return any unused medicine to the pharmacist. Do not flush them down the toilet or throw them away.**

Useful numbers

- GOSH switchboard: 020 7405 9200
- Pharmacy medicines information: 020 7829 8608 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm)
- Neurology Department: 020 7813 8308

Notes

Compiled by the Neurology Department in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group

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