Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Amiodarone

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Nexterone; Pacerone [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Amiodarone; DOM-Amiodarone [DSC]; JAMP-Amiodarone; PMS-Amiodarone; PRO-Amiodarone-200; RIVA-Amiodarone; SANDOZ Amiodarone; TEVA-Amiodarone

Warning

- This drug is only used to treat abnormal heartbeats that may be deadly. It may cause severe and sometimes deadly side effects like lung, thyroid, or liver problems. This drug can also cause the abnormal heartbeats to get worse. Blood work, tests, and other exams will need to be done to check for side effects. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- This drug will be started in a hospital where you will be closely watched. Talk with your doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat certain types of abnormal heartbeats.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have any of these health problems: Certain types of abnormal heartbeats called heart block or sick-sinus syndrome, shock caused by heart problems, or slow heartbeat.
- If you have any of these health problems: Low calcium levels, low magnesium levels, or low potassium levels.
- If you are taking any drugs that can cause a certain type of heartbeat that is not normal (prolonged QT interval). There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.
- If you take any drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) that must not be taken with this drug, like certain drugs that are used for hepatitis C, HIV, infections, and others. There are many drugs that must not be taken with this drug.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug. You may also need to avoid breast-feeding for some time after your last dose. Talk with your doctor to see if you need to avoid breast-feeding after your last dose.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.
- Have your blood work checked and eye exams as you have been told by your doctor.
- Low blood pressure has happened with this drug. Sometimes this has been deadly. Talk with the doctor.
- Check your blood pressure as you have been told.
- Slow heartbeat and the need to get a pacemaker have happened when amiodarone was given with sofosbuvir and certain other hepatitis C drugs. Sometimes, this has been deadly. If you also take drugs for hepatitis C, talk with your doctor.
- If you have a defibrillator or pacemaker, talk with your doctor.
- If you will be having a heart transplant, talk with your doctor. Patients taking this drug may have a risk of a life-threatening problem that sometimes happens within 24 hours after getting a heart transplant.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice.
- If diarrhea or throwing up happens, talk with the doctor. You will need to make sure to avoid dehydration and electrolyte problems.
- A very bad eye problem has rarely happened with this drug. This may lead to a change in eyesight and sometimes loss of eyesight, which may not come back. Talk with the doctor.
- You may get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- Long-term use of this drug may lead to certain nerve problems. This may not go back to normal when this drug is stopped. If you have questions, talk with

the doctor.

- This drug stays in your body for weeks or months even after you stop it. Before you start taking other drugs, be sure to tell your doctor and pharmacist that you have taken this drug.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect fertility. Fertility problems may lead to not being able to get pregnant or father a child. If you plan to get pregnant or father a child, talk with your doctor before taking this drug.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

All products:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat. Rarely, some allergic reactions have been deadly.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Signs of thyroid problems like change in weight; feeling nervous, excitable,

restless, or weak; hair thinning; depression; eye or neck swelling; not able to focus; trouble with heat or cold; menstrual changes; shakiness; or sweating.

- Change in balance.
- Shakiness, trouble moving around, or stiffness.
- Blue or gray skin color.
- Sunburn.
- Coughing up blood.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Fast or slow heartbeat.
- An abnormal heartbeat that is new or worse.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- If bright lights bother your eyes.
- Trouble controlling body movements.
- Muscle weakness.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Lowered interest in sex.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

Injection:

- This drug may cause tissue damage if the drug leaks from the vein. Tell your nurse if you have any redness, burning, pain, swelling, blisters, skin sores, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your body.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Constipation, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Headache.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Flushing.
- Change in taste.
- Change in sense of smell.
- More saliva.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Tablets:

- Take with or without food but take the same way each time. Always take with food or always take on an empty stomach.
- Take with food if it causes an upset stomach.
- If you take cholestyramine, talk with your pharmacist about how to take it with this drug.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Injection:

- It is given into a vein for a period of time.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Tablets:

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- This drug will be given in a health care setting.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

Tablets:

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep lid tightly closed.

Injection:

- This drug will be given in a healthcare setting. You will not store it at home.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions,

treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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