

Flunarizine for headache

Flunarizine is a medication used to help prevent migraine, especially in people who also experience vertigo or hemiplegic migraine. It is widely used in Europe and Canada but is not licensed in the UK for any indication. Sometimes a medicine is used “off-label”. This means it is not officially licensed for this condition, but there is good evidence that it is safe and effective. Flunarizine is widely used by headache specialists and supported by clinical evidence.

Before starting flunarizine:

Your prescriber will consider several factors before prescribing flunarizine to make sure it's safe and suitable for you.

Please tell your prescriber if you:

- Age of 50 (higher risk of tremor)
- Depression (past or present)
- Movement disorders (e.g. Parkinsonian symptoms)
- Obesity
- Lactose intolerance
- Liver problems

How to take flunarizine:

You will usually start on a low dose of flunarizine, which will be increased. This helps your body adjust and reduces the chance of side effects.

The schedule below is a guide, but your prescriber may change it to suit your individual needs.

	Evening
For 14 days take:	5mg
Thereafter take:	10mg

How long to take flunarizine:

Keep taking flunarizine for at least 3 months before deciding if it is helping. Your prescriber will review your treatment regularly.

If needed, flunarizine can be stopped suddenly. As this medication stays in your body for a long time, it may take a few weeks for any side effects to go away after you stop taking it.

As flunarizine stays in your body for a long time, to avoid drug accumulation and associated side effects, treatment breaks are required. Please discuss this with your prescriber. This might be:

- A 1-month break from taking flunarizine
- Taking it less often (e.g. on alternate days or weekdays only)

This leaflet reflects a consensus of current clinical practice as agreed by the British Association for the Study of Headache (BASH) Council. It is intended to provide information to support clinical decision-making and does not constitute prescriptive guidance that must be followed in all cases. Clinicians should continue to exercise their own professional judgement and tailor management to the individual. The content reflects the collective experience of headache specialists across the UK, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged, and recognises the ongoing evolution of best practice. This leaflet should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Product Characteristics and the patient information leaflet provided with all medication.

Possible side effects of flunarizine:

Some people get side effects. These usually get better as your body gets used to the medication.

Please read the information leaflet that comes with your medication for more details. This is not a full list of side effects, but the most common ones are:

- increased appetite and weight gain
- feeling tired
- low mood
- difficulty sleeping
- dry mouth
- blocked or runny nose
- feeling sick (nausea), stomach pain or constipation
- muscle aches

Rarely, some people experience tremor, slow movements and stiffness, known as Parkinsonian symptoms.

You should look out for symptoms of low mood and discontinue flunarizine if this occurs.

Alcohol may increase the risk of tiredness when taking flunarizine.

If you feel tired or dizzy, do not drive, ride a bike, or use tools or machinery.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding:

Flunarizine is not safe in pregnancy or breastfeeding

- Do not take it if you are pregnant or trying for a baby
- Speak to your GP for advice about safe contraception and pregnancy planning
- Flunarizine needs to be stopped for 3 months before trying for a pregnancy
- Always tell your prescriber if you think you might be pregnant

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