

Anti-arrhythmic agents

Amiodarone (Cordarone®)

Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

It does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.



What is amiodarone used for?

Amiodarone (say *am-ee-oh-dah-rone*) is used to prevent or treat certain types of irregular heart rhythms. This medication is known as a “rhythm control” agent. It helps the heart to beat at a regular pace when irregular beats are present.

Why should I take this medication?

The heart muscle can weaken and the heart does not pump as well when contractions are fast, irregular, and uncoordinated.

When the heart beats too quickly, some blood gets trapped in the heart chambers. This blood can clot. Blood clots can lead to a heart attack, stroke, or the heart stopping (cardiac arrest).

Amiodarone helps the heart to pump at a regular pace which should improve your symptoms.

How does amiodarone work?

Your heart is controlled by an electrical system. It triggers the heart to beat at a regular pace. When the heart’s electrical systems is disrupted for any reason, heart beats become irregular and the heart does not pump as well. We call these arrhythmias (say *ah-rith-mee-uhz*).

Amiodarone controls these disorganized electrical impulses, allowing the heart to slow down and beat regularly.

What should I expect?

It takes a few weeks for amiodarone to reach its full effect. Even when you feel well, keep taking amiodarone until your doctor tells you something different.

How do I take amiodarone?

- Take amiodarone exactly as prescribed.
- It is best to take this medication at the same time each day so you don't miss a dose.
- If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you remember the next day or close to the time of your next dose, just take your next scheduled dose.
Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.
- **Do not** stop taking this medication or adjust your dose without first talking to your pharmacist or doctor.

What about taking it with food or other medicines?

You can take this medicine with or without food but take it the same way each time. This means always take with food or always take on an empty stomach. Take it with food if it gives you an upset stomach.

Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while on this medication. It affects how your intestines absorb amiodarone.

Amiodarone interacts with many medicines, herbal medicines, and alternative and natural products. Check with your pharmacist or doctor before starting new medications or supplements. Remind any doctor or nurse practitioner that you are taking amiodarone.

What should I watch for?

You might have some unwanted side effects when you first begin taking this medication. Common side effects include:

- dizziness
- imbalance
- tremor
- decreased appetite
- upset stomach (nausea)
- throwing up (vomiting)
- headache
- constipation
- skin more sensitive to sunlight

These effects should improve with time. Try taking it with food. Make sure you wear sunscreen. Contact your pharmacist or doctor if any side effects bother you or get worse.

When taking amiodarone for a long time, there is a small chance of getting changes in your vision or changes in how your thyroid, liver, or lungs work. To lessen the chances of these happening, expect your doctor to send you for certain blood and other tests.

Other helpful points

Amiodarone should not be taken while you are pregnant. While on amiodarone, use birth control. If you are planning on becoming pregnant, contact your doctor so you can be changed to another medication.