

Tramadol Immediate Release (Ultram®)

Why is this medication prescribed?

- This medication is used to relieve moderate to severe pain.
- Tramadol is an atypical opioid medication because it has a unique mechanism of action:
 - Tramadol binds with certain opioid receptors to block pain signals from reaching the brain. This is similar to opioid medications such as morphine.
 - Tramadol also works by increasing the brain levels of 2 chemical messengers, norepinephrine and serotonin. This is similar to some antidepressant medications such as venlafaxine or duloxetine.

How should this medication be used?

- This medication is an immediate release product that comes as 50 mg tablets.
- It can be taken with or without food.
- **The usual recommended dose of immediate release tramadol is:**
 - **1 tablet (= 50 mg) or 2 tablets (= 100 mg) every 4 or 6 hours as needed for pain relief**
 - Some patients find that starting slowly at half of a 50 mg tablet (= 25 mg) twice a day and gradually increasing the amount of tramadol taken improves tolerability.
- **The maximum dose of tramadol is 400 mg per day.**
- **Do NOT** stop this medication abruptly. Generally, a gradual dose reduction is needed if the drug ever needs to be stopped.

**Tramadol is not covered by some drug plans, including the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program*

When does this medication start to work?

- With each immediate release tramadol dose, the onset of effect is within one hour of use while the peak activity is reached in 2 to 3 hours after use. The duration of medication action is a few hours, which is why tramadol is dosed every 4 to 6 hours as needed.

What special precautions should I follow?

- You should NOT take this medication if you have had an allergic reaction to tramadol.
- Be sure to tell your physician and pharmacist if you have any of the following conditions before starting tramadol:
 - History of head injury or seizures
 - Current or prior issues with drug/alcohol addiction or abuse
 - Conditions affecting the intestines (e.g., bowel obstruction)

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- Liver or kidney disease
- Breathing problems
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- **Do NOT** take tramadol with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) (e.g., antidepressants phenelzine, tranylcypromine, or moclobemide; Parkinson's disease medications selegiline or rasagiline) or within 14 days of stopping a MAOI.
- Tramadol can impact the mental/physical abilities needed to do certain tasks such as driving a vehicle and operating machinery). It is best to wait until your body adjusts to this new medication or a dose change before driving or operating machinery.
- If you already take medications that cause drowsiness, the addition of tramadol can cause further drowsiness.
- Be sure to tell your doctor and pharmacist all of the medications you take (prescription, non-prescription, herbals, over-the-counter products, etc.) so drug interactions can be minimized.
- Tramadol should NOT be taken with alcohol

What should I do if I forget a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it unless it is almost time for the next dose. In this case, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule.
- Do **NOT** take a double dose to make up for a missed dose.

What side effects can this medication cause?

All medicines can cause side effects. Some side effects can be serious, while others might just be annoying. Possible side effects of tramadol include:

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| ● Dizziness | ● Drowsiness |
| ● Constipation | ● Dry mouth |
| ● Nausea | ● Confusion |
| ● Headache | |

Tramadol has a small potential to be habit forming, although this is less than the risk with opioid medications. Inform your doctor **immediately** if you notice:

- Seizures
- Symptoms of serotonin syndrome, a condition where there is too much serotonin that is typically due to a drug interaction. Symptoms include shivering, overactive reflexes (twitching/muscle jerks), increased body temperature, changes in blood pressure/heart rate/breathing, agitation/restlessness, sweating

Your doctor prescribed this therapy because he/she has judged the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this therapy do not have serious side effects.

How should I store this medication?

- In a secure location (ideally a locked cupboard) due to tramadol's opioid-related properties.
- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed and out of reach of children.
- Store at room temperature, away from excess heat/moisture (not in the kitchen or bathroom).
- If at any point in the future tramadol is stopped by your doctor, return any remaining supply to your community pharmacist for proper medication disposal.

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