

Tramadol-Acetaminophen (Tramacet®)

Why is this medication prescribed?

- This medication is used to relieve moderate to severe pain.
- It consists of 2 different drugs: tramadol and acetaminophen (Tylenol®).
- 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.
- Acetaminophen is a non-opioid medication and when combined with tramadol, increases the pain relief response.

How should this medication be used?

- This medication is an immediate release product. It can be taken with or without food.
- Each tablet contains: 37.5 mg of tramadol and 325 mg of acetaminophen.
- The usual recommended dose of tramadol-acetaminophen is:
 - 1 or 2 tablets every 4 or 6 hours as needed for pain relief (or as prescribed)
 - Some patients find that starting slowly and gradually increasing the number of tramadol-acetaminophen tablets taken improves tolerability.
- **The maximum number of tramadol/acetaminophen tablets is 8 per day**
- **The maximum amount of acetaminophen from ALL sources is 4,000 mg per day (taking more than this can cause liver damage)**
 - If you are above 70 years of age or consume alcohol, we recommend a maximum amount of acetaminophen from ALL sources of 2,600 mg/day.
- Do NOT stop this medication abruptly. Generally, a gradual dose reduction is needed if the drug ever needs to be stopped.

**Note: tramadol/acetaminophen is not covered by certain drug plans, including the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program.*

When does this medication start to work?

- With each tramadol/acetaminophen dose, the onset of effect is within 1 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/acetaminophen is dosed every 4 to 6 hours as needed.

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What special precautions should I follow?

- You should NOT take this medication if you have had an allergic reaction to tramadol or acetaminophen.
- If you already take medications that cause drowsiness, the addition of tramadol/acetaminophen can cause further drowsiness.
- Be sure to tell your physician and pharmacist if you have any of the following conditions before starting tramadol/acetaminophen:
 - History of head injury or seizures
 - Current or prior issues with drug/alcohol addiction or abuse
 - Conditions affecting the intestines (e.g., bowel obstruction)
 - Liver or kidney disease; breathing problems; pregnant or breastfeeding
- **Do NOT** take tramadol/acetaminophen 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/acetaminophen 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.
- 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/acetaminophen 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/acetaminophen 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/acetaminophen is stopped by your doctor, return any remaining supply to your community pharmacist for proper medication disposal.

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