



*Better
Together*

Patient information

Flecainide 'Pill in the Pocket'

Cardiology Directorate

You have been given a medicine called Flecainide by a specialist cardiology doctor.

Why has my doctor given me flecainide and what are the benefits?

You have been given flecainide to regulate the heart's rhythm. It is usually prescribed if you have a condition where the heart can occasionally (paroxysmally) go into a fast heart rhythm (arrhythmia). This fast heart rhythm can be either paroxysmal atrial fibrillation (AF) or paroxysmal supraventricular tachycardia (SVT).

Flecainide can be used for these conditions as a medicine to be taken only when you feel the heart start to beat very fast to try to correct the rhythm. This is known as "Pill in the pocket" medication.

You will usually have been given flecainide when you were in hospital so the doctor knows that it has worked to correct your heart rhythm before giving it to you to take home.

Check with your doctor if you are still not sure why you have been prescribed flecainide.

How does it work?

Flecainide tries to control your heart rate and can be used to make the heart return to a normal rhythm if it is beating fast.

How should I take it?

The next time you experience the symptoms you have of the fast heart rhythm please go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department (A&E) with your letter and medicine given when discharged from hospital if possible. The doctors will then tell you whether to take the flecainide or not.

Once the doctors have said you can start to take the medicine at home and do not need to return to hospital, when you next experience the fast heart rhythm then you should take the flecainide as directed on the label.

The usual dose can be either 150mg, 200mg or 300mg depending on your weight, taken as a single dose. This should be taken if you experience the feeling that your heart is beating fast (same symptoms as when you were diagnosed with the arrhythmia) and it has lasted for at least 15 minutes.

This should work to put heart back into normal rhythm. If after six hours the feelings of the fast irregular heart rhythm are still there then please go to the Emergency Department of your local hospital. If you feel extremely short of breath or any other worsening symptoms before six hours then please go to the Emergency Department sooner.

Do not take more than one dose in a 24 hour period. If you take too much please contact your doctor or attend The Emergency Department straight away.

How do I get supplies of the medication?

Try not to run out of tablets by always having one dose at home. The first two doses are usually given from hospital then any further doses that are needed are from your family doctor (GP) or the Emergency Department of the hospital when you attend there.

What are the risks of taking flecainide?

There are risks and benefits of taking all medicines however your doctor will discuss with you why there are more benefits than risks for you to take flecainide. There are some possible side effects to all medicines.

As this medicine is only taken occasionally, the chance of side effects may be smaller than if it was taken every day.

What are the side effects of flecainide?

All medicines have side effects. Not everybody will experience side effects. Some of the possible side effects are listed below:

- Flecainide should not be taken if you have had a previous heart attack or if you have a condition called heart failure so speak to your doctor if you think this applies to you.
- Feeling sick, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Feeling tired.
- Feeling anxious or confused or have a change in mood.
- Slow heart rate.
- Feeling faint or light-headed.

For a more complete list please see the manufacturers information leaflet in the box of tablets

If you do notice any side effects please contact your doctor to discuss.

Can I take other medicines while taking flecainide?

Some other medicines may affect how flecainide works. It is important that you check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any other medicines, including ones that you buy.

Some examples of medicines that should not be taken with flecainide are: some antidepressants, some antimalarial medicines, some other medicines for irregular heart rhythms e.g. Amiodarone or Verapamil, some antiviral medications e.g. for HIV treatment, some medications to treat epilepsy.

Are there any alternative treatments available?

There are other tablets available for treating fast heart rhythms which may or may not have been tried before starting flecainide. It is a treatment approved by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). Other options available should be discussed with your doctor.

What will happen if I decide not to have flecainide?

If you decide not to take the medicine you will not get any of the benefits. You must discuss this with your doctor as they need to know if you are not taking it and may prescribe an alternative for you.

This leaflet is not a substitute for any advice that your doctor, nurse or pharmacist may give you.

You can get more detailed information from the manufacturer's information leaflet.

Further information

Heart Emergency Centre, Royal Liverpool Hospital

Tel: 0151 706 2992

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2992

Alternative sources of information:

Patient.co.uk

Atrial Fibrillation Association

British Heart Foundation

Expert Patient Programme:

There is a free self-management programme for people living with long term health conditions. For more information, or to attend a course, please Tel: 0151 296 7442

NHS Direct:

For free advice and information on any health matter 24 hours a day, seven days a week, please phone 111.

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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