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PATIENT EDUCATION

Duloxetine

Cymbalta / Drizalma Sprinkle / Generic delayed-release capsules

A guide for adults taking duloxetine.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

DO NOT STOP SUDDENLY | ASK BEFORE OPENING A CAPSULE

Formulations: Delayed-release capsules protect the medication from stomach acid. Cymbalta and Drizalma Sprinkle have different instructions for opening capsules.

What it is used for

Duloxetine treats depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and certain pain conditions, including diabetic nerve pain, fibromyalgia, and chronic musculoskeletal pain. Your treatment goal may involve mood, pain, or both.

How it works

It slows serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake. These messengers participate in mood regulation and pathways that help modulate pain signals.

What to expect over time

Sleep, energy, or appetite may change before mood improves. Benefit usually builds over several weeks; some conditions need a longer trial at a useful dose.

Track the symptoms you are treating and how you manage daily activities. Keep follow-up appointments. Schedule an earlier appointment if your mood gets worse.

Taking your medication

- Take with or without food; food may help nausea.
- Swallow Cymbalta whole. Drizalma Sprinkle may be opened onto applesauce according to its own instructions; do not crush or chew the pellets.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Consult with your provider before stopping; a gradual reduction helps limit withdrawal symptoms.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Nausea, dry mouth, or constipation
- Sweating, headache, or dizziness
- Sleep changes or reduced appetite
- Sexual side effects; increased blood pressure or pulse

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Antidepressants can increase suicidal thoughts in people under 25. Watch for changes in mood or behavior at any age, especially when starting treatment or changing a dose.

Tell your provider about emotional numbness, unusual agitation, or a reduced need for sleep with increased energy. These changes may call for a treatment adjustment.

Have blood pressure checked before starting and during treatment. Report unusual bleeding, severe headache, confusion, or marked weakness; low sodium is one possible cause.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss any history of mania or bipolar disorder, seizures, heart disease, glaucoma, and kidney or liver problems.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Avoid use with substantial alcohol intake or chronic liver disease. Severe kidney impairment also affects whether it is appropriate.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

MAOIs require a specific switching interval. Other serotonergic medicines can cause serotonin syndrome; aspirin, NSAIDs, and anticoagulants increase bleeding risk.

Fluvoxamine, ciprofloxacin, and other inhibitors raise exposure. Duloxetine affects CYP2D6 medicines. Review blood-pressure medicines, stimulants, sedatives, and alcohol.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for a seizure, severe allergic reaction, or sudden eye pain with vision changes. Fever with agitation, diarrhea, and stiff or twitching muscles may be serotonin syndrome and needs urgent assessment.

Prompt medical advice. Seek prompt advice for yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, right upper abdominal pain, or unusual fatigue. Report worsening mood, urinary retention, or severe dizziness.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Can I stop when I feel better?
Consult with your provider. Continuing treatment after improvement can reduce the chance that symptoms return. Most antidepressants should be reduced gradually to limit withdrawal symptoms.

What if I have sexual side effects?
Changes in desire, arousal, or orgasm are worth discussing. Your provider can review the dose or treatment options; do not stop or skip doses on your own.

Everyday tips

A regular dose time and refill reminder can help prevent missed doses.

Bring a few specific observations to appointments: sleep, motivation, anxiety, and activities that have become easier or harder.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

Lilly: Cymbalta prescribing information
DailyMed: Drizalma Sprinkle prescribing information

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.