Information on DISULFIRAM for Service Users and their Families

This leaflet provides general information about your medication. Manufacturer patient information leaflets are also provided with all medicines. If you require further information, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Disulfiram is also known as Antabuse®

It is available as 200mg tablets.

Disulfiram is pronounced:

Dye-sul-fee-ram.

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The Mersey Care Medicines Information Service¹ regularly updates this information sheet.

¹ Medicines Information, Pharmacy, Mossley Hill Hospital, Park Avenue, Liverpool L18 8BU
**What is Disulfiram for?**
Disulfiram is used by specialists to help people who drink alcohol in a way that is harmful or who are dependent on alcohol, to stop drinking. If you take disulfiram and drink alcohol, you will experience very unpleasant reactions which may help you to stop drinking more alcohol. Disulfiram is used in combination with counselling and support to help you to stop drinking alcohol.

**How should I take Disulfiram?**
Before taking disulfiram tell your doctor if:
- you are allergic to disulfiram tablets or any of its ingredients
- you suffer from any other conditions, especially heart, kidney, liver or lung problems, blood pressure problems, stroke, fits, diabetes, mental illness, brain damage, personality disorder
- you have recently drank alcohol
- you take any other medicines, including any medicines that you may have bought without a prescription
- you are pregnant (or planning pregnancy) or breastfeeding

Treatment with disulfiram usually starts after you have been weaned off alcohol (detox) usually in hospital. It is important that you have not drunk alcohol for at least 24 hours before taking the first dose. On the first day of treatment, you may be given up to 4 tablets of disulfiram in one dose (800 mg). The next day, 3 tablets followed on the third day by 2 tablets and on the fourth and fifth days by 1 tablet. After that, you will take 1 or half a tablet daily for as long as advised by the doctor. Swallow the tablets with water.

Never take more than the prescribed dose of your tablets. If you accidentally take more than the prescribed amount or an overdose of Disulfiram contact your doctor or go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Always take the container with you, if possible, even if it is empty. Ask you doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are not sure of anything.

**Do I need to have blood tests?**
Your doctor will do a check up and blood tests before starting treatment to check if you are suitable for treatment. You will also be monitored regularly during treatment to make sure you can continue to receive disulfiram.
Can I stop taking Disulfiram if I feel better?
Your doctor will advise you about how long you should carry on taking your medication. Do not stop taking the tablets unless told to do so by your doctor. Treatment with Disulfiram is usually reviewed regularly.

What if I forget to take Disulfiram?
If you forget to take a dose, take the missed dose as soon as possible. However, if 12 hours have passed, you should not take it. Do not double the dose or take extra doses to make up. If you forget to take your medicine for more than a few days, speak to your doctor before taking any more Disulfiram.

Can I take other medicines?
Other medicines may interact with disulfiram causing unwanted effects. Medicines you can buy over the counter without a prescription may interact with prescribed medicines. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines.

Are there any side effects?
Disulfiram may cause side effects in some people, but they may vary from person to person. Many side effects wear off over time. Known side effects include:

- feeling or being sick
- drowsiness
- changes in sexual function
- allergic rash, with itching, redness and dry skin

See your doctor as soon as possible if you develop the following problems which may need urgent attention:

- changes in your mood e.g. low mood, paranoia, feeling elated
- pain and loss of sensation in hands and feet
- yellow skin and eyes
- disulfiram-alcohol reaction (see below)

If you are concerned about any other side effects, talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you think a medicine has caused you an unwanted side effect, please report the problem either on a Yellow Card form available from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist OR online at this website [http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/](http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/).
**Can I drive?**
Disulfiram tablets may cause drowsiness or tiredness. If your condition and the medication affect you in this way, do not drive and work with machinery.

**Can I drink alcohol?**
Do not drink alcohol whilst taking disulfiram. Be aware that certain foods, liquid medicines, remedies, tonics, toiletries, perfumes and aerosol sprays may contain alcohol. If you drink or are exposed to alcohol during treatment with disulfiram or within two weeks of stopping it, a “disulfiram-alcohol” reaction may occur. The reaction is serious and difficult to predict and may be life threatening. It can happen within 15 minutes after drinking alcohol and may last several hours. Symptoms of the reaction are facial flushing, high body temperature, sweating, feeling or being sick, itchy skin or rash, anxiety, dizziness, headache, blurred eyesight, difficulty or rapid breathing and very fast or uneven heartbeat, blood pressure changes. In some cases, chest pain, breathing problems, fits and coma may occur. If you get any of these symptoms, contact your doctor. Remember, even a small amount of alcohol may cause you to start drinking heavily again.

**Can I get pregnant or breast-feed?**
Medicines can have harmful effects at any time during pregnancy. If you are pregnant, or are planning to get pregnant or breastfeeding, you should seek advice from your doctor. You and your doctor or specialist will decide if the potential benefits of treatment outweigh the potential risks to the baby.

**What alternative treatments are there?**
You may be offered other medication such as naltrexone or acamprosate to help with alcohol problems. However, some treatments may not be suitable for you, depending on your exact circumstances and your doctor will help you to decide the best option.

**IMPORTANT**
Remember to keep medicines where children cannot see or reach them. Never share medicines with others even if their symptoms appear the same as yours.

**NEVER EXCEED THE STATED DOSE OF YOUR MEDICINE**