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# Amitriptyline

Generic Name: amitriptyline (a mee TRIP ti leen)

Brand names: *Vanatrip, Elavil, Endep*

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## What is amitriptyline?

Amitriptyline is in a group of drugs called tricyclic antidepressants. It affects chemicals in the brain that may become unbalanced.

Amitriptyline is used to treat symptoms of depression.

Amitriptyline may also be used for other purposes not listed in this medication guide.

## Important information about amitriptyline

Do not use this medication if you are allergic to amitriptyline, or if you have recently had a [heart attack](#). Do not use amitriptyline if you have taken cisapride (Propulsid) or used an MAO inhibitor such as isocarboxazid (Marplan), phenelzine (Nardil), rasagiline (Azilect), selegiline (Eldepryl, Emsam), or tranylcypromine (Parnate) within the past 14 days.

You may have thoughts about suicide when you first start taking an antidepressant, especially if you are younger than 24 years old. Your doctor will need to check you at regular visits for at least the first 12 weeks of treatment.

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Call your doctor at once if you have any new or worsening symptoms such as: mood or behavior changes, anxiety, panic attacks, trouble [sleeping](#), or if you feel impulsive, irritable, agitated, hostile, aggressive, restless, hyperactive (mentally or physically), more depressed, or have thoughts about suicide or hurting yourself.

## Before taking amitriptyline

Do not use this medication if you are allergic to amitriptyline, or if you have recently had a heart attack. Do not use amitriptyline if you have taken cisapride (Propulsid) or used an MAO inhibitor such as isocarboxazid (Marplan), phenelzine (Nardil), rasagiline (Azilect), selegiline (Eldepryl, Emsam), or tranylcypromine (Parnate) within the past 14 days. Serious, life-threatening side effects can occur if you take amitriptyline before the MAO inhibitor has cleared from [your body](#). Before taking amitriptyline, tell your doctor if you are allergic to any drugs, or if you have:

- [heart disease](#);
- a history of heart attack, stroke, or seizures;
- bipolar disorder (manic-depression);
- schizophrenia or other mental illness;
- diabetes (amitriptyline may raise or [lower blood sugar](#));
- overactive thyroid;
- glaucoma; or
- problems with [urination](#).

If you have any of these conditions, you may need a dose adjustment or special tests to safely take amitriptyline.

You may have thoughts about suicide when you first start taking an antidepressant, especially if you are younger than 24 years old. Tell your doctor if you have worsening symptoms of depression or suicidal thoughts during the first several weeks of treatment, or whenever your dose is changed.

[Your family](#) or other caregivers should also be alert to changes in your mood or symptoms. Your doctor will need to check you at regular visits for at least the first 12 weeks of treatment.

FDA pregnancy category C. This medication may be harmful to an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant during treatment. Amitriptyline can pass into breast milk and may harm a nursing baby. Do not use this medication without telling your doctor if you are breast-feeding a baby. Do not give this medication to anyone under 18 years old without the advice of a doctor.

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## How should I take amitriptyline?

Take this medication exactly as it was prescribed for you. Do not take the medication in larger amounts, or take it for longer than recommended by your doctor. Follow the directions on your prescription label.

If you need to have any type of surgery, tell the surgeon ahead of time that you are taking

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amitriptyline. You may need to stop using the medicine for a short time.

Do not stop using amitriptyline without first talking to your doctor. You may need to use less and less before you stop the medication completely. Stopping this medication suddenly could cause you to have unpleasant side effects. It may take up to 4 weeks of using this medicine before your symptoms improve. For best results, keep using the medication as directed. Talk with your doctor if your symptoms do not improve after 4 weeks of treatment. Store amitriptyline at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

See also: [Amitriptyline dosage](#) (in more detail)

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the medicine at the next regularly scheduled time. Do not take extra medicine to make up the missed dose.

## What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention if you think you have used too much of this medicine. An overdose of amitriptyline can be fatal.

Overdose symptoms may include uneven heartbeats, extreme drowsiness, confusion, agitation, vomiting, blurred vision, feeling hot or cold, [sweating](#), muscle stiffness, feeling light-headed, fainting, seizure (convulsions), or coma.

## What should I avoid while taking amitriptyline?

Avoid drinking alcohol. It can cause dangerous side effects when taken together with amitriptyline.

Grapefruit and grapefruit juice may interact with amitriptyline. Discuss the use of grapefruit products with your doctor before increasing or decreasing the amount of grapefruit products in your diet.

Amitriptyline can cause side effects that may impair your thinking or reactions. Be careful if you drive or do anything that requires you to be awake and alert. Avoid exposure to sunlight or artificial UV rays (sunlamps or tanning beds). Amitriptyline can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight and sunburn may result. Use a sunscreen (minimum SPF 15) and wear protective clothing if you must be out in the sun.

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## Amitriptyline side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; [difficulty breathing](#); swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Call your doctor at once if you have any new or worsening symptoms such as: mood or behavior changes, anxiety, panic attacks, trouble sleeping, or if you feel impulsive, irritable, agitated, hostile, aggressive, restless, hyperactive (mentally or physically), more depressed, or have thoughts about suicide or hurting yourself.

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## Help and Support

Looking for answers? [Ask a question](#) or go join the [amitriptyline support group](#) to connect with others who have similar interests.

Call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects:

- fast, pounding, or uneven heart rate, chest pain or heavy feeling, pain spreading to the arm or shoulder, nausea, sweating, general ill feeling;
- sudden numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body;
- sudden headache, confusion, problems with vision, speech, or balance;
- hallucinations, or seizures (convulsions), feeling light-headed, fainting;
- restless muscle movements in your eyes, tongue, jaw, or neck, uncontrollable shaking or tremor;
- skin rash, severe tingling, numbness, pain, muscle weakness;
- easy bruising or bleeding;
- extreme thirst with headache, nausea, vomiting, and weakness; or
- urinating less than usual or not at all.

Less serious side effects may include:

- nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, loss of appetite;
- dry mouth, unpleasant taste;
- feeling dizzy, drowsy, or tired;
- trouble concentrating;
- nightmares;
- blurred vision, headache, ringing in your ears;
- breast swelling (in men or women); or
- decreased [sex](#) drive, impotence, or difficulty having an orgasm.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Tell your doctor about any unusual or bothersome side effect. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

See also: [Amitriptyline side effects](#) (in more detail)

## What other drugs will affect amitriptyline?

Tell your doctor if you regularly use other medicines that make you sleepy (such as cold medicine, pain medication, muscle relaxers, medicine for seizures, or other antidepressants).

Before taking amitriptyline, tell your doctor if you have used an "SSRI" antidepressant in the past 5 weeks, such as citalopram (Celexa), escitalopram (Lexapro), fluoxetine (Prozac, Sarafem), fluvoxamine (Luvox), paroxetine (Paxil), or sertraline (Zoloft).

Before taking amitriptyline, tell your doctor if you are currently using any of the following drugs:

- cimetidine (Tagamet);
- guanethidine (Ismelin);
- disulfiram (Antabuse); or
- heart rhythm medications such as flecainide (Tambocor), propafenone (Rhythmol), or quinidine (Cardioquin, Quinidex, Quinaglute).

This list is not complete and there are many other medicines that can interact with amitriptyline. Tell your doctor about all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you use. This includes vitamins, minerals, herbal products, and drugs prescribed by other doctors. Do not start using a new medication without telling your doctor. Keep a list with you of all the medicines you use and show this list to any doctor or other [healthcare provider](#) who treats you.

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## Where can I get more information?

- Your pharmacist can provide more information about amitriptyline.

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