

MEDICATIONS FOR PELVIC PAIN

Pelvic pain can have many causes. Your doctor may suggest different types of pain medication to help you feel better. Medication used for nerve pain include Tricyclic and Anti-convulsant medications; and Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors – SNRI's.

TRICYCLIC MEDICATIONS

These were used to treat depression many years ago. Today we try these first to help nerve pain as they work via the chemical signals of the nervous system (neurotransmitters) in the body, spinal cord and brain. It may say 'anti-depressant' on the box, but today we use it for nerve pain.

1 in 2 people find Amitriptyline and nortriptyline helpful for sharp, burning or shooting pains, tenderness all over, irritable bowel or bladder. It is not a pain killer, and won't work straight away. The effect is additive, and you often feel better after 2-4 weeks of taking it daily.

You may have a dry mouth, feel sleepy or constipated but these effects often settle over time or can be managed. Try drinking more water, gum or mouth spray.

To avoid drowsiness in the morning try taking your medication earlier in the evening - ideally 12 hours before you need to wake up. ie. if you get up at 7am, it's ideal to take it at 7pm. Speak to your doctor if you have a heart condition.

Amitriptyline or Nortriptyline (eg. Endep®, Allegron®)

- Start on 5mg at night (half the tablet)
- If your pain has not improved after 2 weeks, increase to 10mg
- You can stay on this dose long term, as it is not addictive.

Amitriptyline cream may be prescribed as it works a little like an anaesthetic to help calm the nerve pain. A compounding chemist will make up the prescription for you. We recommend Stenlake Compounding Chemist who offer postage. Contact Stenlake info@stenlake.com.au, (02) 9387 3205. Expiry may say 2 months, however if kept in the correct environment it should remain active for 6 months.

To apply amitriptyline for perineal pain (vulval, vaginal, anal or penile pain):

- Apply a pea-sized amount onto your clean finger to the area around the entry to the vagina and the inner labia, to cover the perineum, for men include the area behind the scrotum to the anus.
- If your cream contains Estriol, also apply it just inside the vagina. If it stings you may need to start with a very tiny amount and build up slowly.
- Apply morning and night. If you are experiencing a pain flare, you can apply at lunch time until your pain settles. Can also apply to painful scars (once healed) eg. surgical scars

ANTI-CONVULSANT MEDICATIONS

These medications work on the nervous system to help with sharp, shooting pain and are best started in low doses and increased gradually.

Pregabalin (Lyrica®)

- Start on 25 mg on the first evening, for three nights
- 50 mg on the fourth night for three nights
- Add 25 mg in the morning, and continue 50 mg at night, for about 2 weeks
- Once you reach a total dose of 75mg a day, you may have reached the optimal dose for you - ie. your pain is more manageable. Stay on this dose.
- If necessary, increase the dose by 25mg a day every three days up to 75mg twice daily.

Gabapentin (Neurontin®)

- Start on 100 mg and you will slowly increase by 100mg, every three days:
- 100mg on the first night, for three nights
- 200mg the fourth night, for three nights
- 300mg the seventh night, for three nights
- 200mg in the morning (day 11), for three days (plus your 300mg at night)
- 300mg in the morning, 300mg at night
- You are now on a full dose of 300mg twice daily (it may take 2 weeks to take effect, and side effects to reduce). Ideally it should be taken every 8 hours.

Anti-convulsants help about 1 in 5-6 people, and can be used with other medications, such as amitriptyline. Some people may feel dizziness, sleepiness or feel 'spacey' and sometimes there is weight gain. Discuss how to manage these with your doctor.

SEROTONIN NOREPINEPHRINE REUPTAKE INHIBITORS (SNRI)

Duloxetine or venlafaxine have effects to help both pain and anxiety, and work on the neurotransmitters of the nervous system. eg. Cymbalta[®], Effexor[®], Andepra[®]

- Start with 30mg in the morning for 2 – 4 weeks
- If you are sensitive to medication you can open the capsule and tip out half the contents and throw them away, so that you are taking 15mg. Slowly increase to 30mg, as tolerated.
- If your pain has not improved after 4 weeks, increase to 60mg in the morning.
- Some people find they are more awake, and so it is best to take in the morning. Others who feel sleepy can take it in the evening. It may reduce your sex drive and appetite, contribute to loose bowels and nausea. Discuss how to manage these with your doctor.

For more information see The Pelvic Pain Foundation Australia website [HOW TO TAKE MEDICATIONS](#)