

Information Sheet for Doctors when prescribing Flunarizine

Flunarizine is a calcium channel blocker widely used in many countries, including Ireland, for the prevention of migraine in both adults and children. Unfortunately it is not licenced in the UK.

However, you can prescribe Flunarizine on an FP10, providing you obtain written permission from the patient. The starting dose is 10 mg but once control has been achieved, you can either drop down to 5 mg or have 2 successive drug free days each week.

Side-effects are usually not a problem but the major ones are depression, or a Parkinsonian-type presentation, both of which are reversible.

It is easier and quicker for Flunarizine to be prescribed by the GP; otherwise we have to invoke a special arrangement with the Prescribing Advisory Department at NEW Devon CCG, which can take some time to set up.

Please advise us of any patients in whom you prescribe Flunarizine, as we will review them in 6 months' time. But if you feel unable to prescribe then please let us know.

The use of Flunarizine is supported by a statement from NICE which includes the regularly status in Ireland as below. This provides evidence summaries which NICE does for off-label medicines that are considered to be of significance to the NHS when there are no clinically appropriate licenced alternatives, and there are good clinical reasons for its use (Google Migraine Prophylaxis – Flunarizine – NICE):

Ireland Regulatory Status

Flunarizine dihydrochloride 5 mg tablets are licensed in Ireland for the prophylaxis of migraine in adults aged 18 years and older. The Irish summary of product characteristics ([Sibelium](#); Janssen-Cilag) recommends that for adults aged 18 to 64 years the starting dose should be 10 mg daily (taken at night), and for adults aged 65 years and over the starting dose should be 5 mg daily (taken at night). The summary of product characteristics states that if depressive, extrapyramidal or other unacceptable adverse effects occur treatment should be stopped. In addition, it recommends that treatment should be stopped if no significant improvement is seen after 2 months of treatment.

For people whose condition responds to initial treatment, the summary of product characteristics recommends that maintenance treatment should continue at the same daily dose but that there should be 2 successive drug-free days every week. It further recommends that Flunarizine treatment should be stopped after 6 months and that it should only be re-started if the person's condition relapses ([Irish summary of product characteristics: Sibelium](#)).

In line with the [guidance from the General Medical Council \(GMC\)](#) on prescribing unlicensed medicines, it is the responsibility of the prescriber to determine the clinical need of the patient and the suitability of using Flunarizine.