

# Agomelatine (say: Ag-o-mella-teen)

## What is agomelatine used for?

- Agomelatine (Valdoxan®) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of depression (by reducing the time it takes to recover and to help stop the symptoms coming back)
- It is made as tablets.

☞ For depression, about 2 in 3 (65%) people get better with a first antidepressant in 4-6 weeks

☞ If that antidepressant doesn't work, or has too many side effects, switching to another means about half of those people get better (so in total about 75%, or 3 in 4 people will get better with the first or second choice of antidepressant). There are other options after that.

## What is the usual dose of agomelatine?

- The usual dose of agomelatine is 25mg once day at bedtime, although some people need 50mg a day.

## How should I take agomelatine?

- Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing, so they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

## When should I take agomelatine?

- Take your agomelatine at night
- If you are a shift-worker, take your agomelatine at bedtime
- It can be taken before, with, or after food.

## What are the alternatives to agomelatine?

- There are many other medicines for depression (e.g. sertraline, citalopram, mirtazapine, venlafaxine) and also talking therapies.

☞ See our "Handy chart" for depression to help you compare the medicines available

☞ This will help you discuss your care with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

## How long will agomelatine take to work?

- For depression, it seems that agomelatine either works or it doesn't
- You should usually know within about four weeks if it has worked
- If it has not started working in two weeks, the dose may be increased from 25mg (one tablet) at night to 50mg (two tablets) at night
- Then give it another two weeks.

Been depressed before? Antidepressants don't seem to help much? Been irritable, impulsive, and spent too much money? Been overactive, with less need for sleep? Family history of bipolar? If so, it's worth asking: "**Could it be bipolar?**"

## How long will I need to keep taking it for?

- This will depend on your history and how well you are doing.

For depression, if an antidepressant gets you better:

☞ First episode: Taking it for a further 6 months reduces the chances of becoming depressed again

☞ Second episode: Taking it for 1-2 years reduces the chances of becoming depressed again

☞ Three or more episodes: Taking for at least 3-5 years reduces the chances of becoming depressed again.

## Is agomelatine addictive and can I stop taking agomelatine suddenly?

- Agomelatine is not addictive
- There is no problem stopping agomelatine suddenly
- You should make sure you have taken agomelatine long enough, even if you feel better, because your depression can return if treatment is stopped too early.

See our handy fact sheets on 'Coming off Medicines' and 'Coming off antidepressants'

## What should I do if I forget to take a dose of agomelatine at the right time?

- If you forget a dose one night, just wait until the next evening.

If you have problems remembering your doses (many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or case manager about this. Webster, other packs and Apps can help you.

## Can I drink alcohol while I am taking agomelatine?

- It is not thought that alcohol will make the side effects of agomelatine worse
- If you drink a lot of alcohol, it might increase your chances of getting liver damage.



### Will agomelatine affect my other medication?

The few interactions with agomelatine include:

- The effects of agomelatine can sometimes be increased by fluvoxamine (an unlikely combination) and ciprofloxacin (an antibiotic).

You **must** see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) for the full list. Some medicines can still be used together but you must follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

### Can I drive, cycle or operate a boat while I am taking agomelatine?

- Agomelatine should not affect your ability to drive, but it can cause a little dizziness and lightheadedness

- Until you know how agomelatine affects you, be careful about driving or operate machines
- You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times.

### Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking agomelatine?

- You will need a blood test before you start agomelatine, after 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 12 weeks and 6 months
- This is because about 1 in 250 people have a slight rise in LFTs (liver function tests)
- This is almost certainly not a problem but, until proven to be safe, these tests are needed.

### What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking agomelatine?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the Consumer Information Leaflet (CMI) for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Others may get some that are not listed. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think you might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your doctor, pharmacist or case manager.

| Side effect   | What happens  | What to do about it  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>COMMON</b> ( <i>fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )      |   |  |
| Dizziness   | Feeling dizzy an hour or so after your evening dose   | Take the evening dose just before you go to bed. The effect usually wears off in a couple of weeks.  |
| <b>UNCOMMON</b> ( <i>fewer than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i> )   |   |  |
| Affects the liver   | An increase in some LFTs (Liver function tests)   | This happens in about 1 in 250 people, has no symptoms and usually wears off in a few weeks.   |
| <b>RARE but important</b> ( <i>can be serious if not dealt with quickly</i> ) |   |  |
| Thoughts of harming yourself  | Feeling anxious, restless, poor sleep and feel you might want to harm yourself  | See your doctor in the next day, more so if you are under about 20 years old, may have bipolar depression, or are paranoid and/or seeing things  |
| Liver damage  | Dark urine, pale poo, jaundice (yellow-looking skin or eyes), stomach pain (especially just below the ribs), feeling very tired for no good reason. | See your doctor as soon as possible (at least in the next 2 days) and have a blood test straight away. This happens in less than 1 in a thousand people. It most likely to happen in the first 2 months of taking agomelatine. |

**Lifeline** provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) for information & downloads

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand more about agomelatine. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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