

## What is this medication used for?

Naltrexone is an opioid receptor blocker used to treat opioid or alcohol use disorder.

Low doses of naltrexone (LDN) have been used off-label to help with the symptoms of fibromyalgia and myalgic encephalomyelitis / chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). LDN doses range from 0.5 mg to 9 mg per day.

**LDN can help with fatigue, centralized pain, brain fog and sleep quality. It can also make energy crashes less frequent and less severe.**

## Contraindications or precautions

Before you start this medication, tell your primary care provider or pharmacist if you:

- Are sensitive to or allergic to naltrexone
- Take opioid medications (e.g. codeine, morphine, hydromorphone, tramadol)
- Live with acute hepatitis or liver failure

This is not a complete list. Ask your pharmacist for more information.

## How do I take this medication?

Your CCDP doctor or pharmacist will work with you to make a plan. They will tell you how to take the medication.

If you are sensitive to medications, start at a low dose (0.5 mg to 1 mg). Slowly increase the dose every 1 to 3 weeks. The usual target dose for people with ME/CFS or fibromyalgia is 4.5 mg to 5 mg daily.

It is best to take LDN at night. Take the medication 2 hours before bed. You can take LDN with or without food.

## When will the medication start to work?

At a dose of 4.5 mg daily, it may take up to 12 weeks to experience the full benefit. Half of people with fibromyalgia may experience some pain relief with 3 mg to 4 mg per day. Most people (95%) experience pain relief at a dose of 5 mg to 6 mg/day.

## Possible Side Effects

- Vivid dreams
- Trouble sleeping
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Upset stomach (nausea, pain, diarrhea, constipation)
- Liver problems (seen with high doses)

If you have vivid dreams or trouble sleeping, take LDN in the morning.

If you have an upset stomach, take LDN after a meal.

Minor side effects like headaches and stomach upset usually get better within 1-2 weeks of starting LDN. You can continue LDN if you can cope with these effects. You should stop taking LDN and call your primary care provider if any side effects are severe or do not go away.

**Call 911 if you have an allergic reaction (swollen lips or tongue, breathing problems, rash on most of the body). This is an emergency.**

## Interactions

Avoid:

- Opioid medications: e.g. codeine (ingredient in some non-prescription cough and pain products), morphine, hydromorphone, tramadol

**Note:** This is not a complete list. Talk with your primary care provider or pharmacist before you take a new medication or supplement.

## How is the medication supplied?

Naltrexone is available as a 50 mg tablet.

Low doses (less than 12.5 mg) must be made by a compounding pharmacy.

Compounded LDN comes in oral liquid or oral capsules.

## What will it cost?

Costs vary for compounded LDN. Ask your pharmacy about cost before you fill the prescription. You can move your prescription to the most convenient pharmacy for you.

**Compounded LDN liquid and capsules are not covered** under the provincial drug plan, BC Pharmacare, or most private insurers.

## Note for CCDP Patients

Please contact the CCDP to schedule a pharmacist appointment if you have any questions about this medication, including questions about side effects, dose adjustments, and compounding.