

ENDOCRINOLOGY PATIENT INFORMATION

CABERGOLINE OR BROMOCRIPTINE

These drugs are **dopamine agonists**.

Cabergoline has a long duration of action and can usually be given once or twice weekly. This is the usual dopamine agonist your doctor will prescribe. It is supplied under the trade name *Dostinex* and is available as tablets containing 0.5 mg (500 microgram) cabergoline.

Bromocriptine has a short duration of action and usually needs to be given once daily.

These drugs are used to lower the level of prolactin in the blood of patients with high values, or lower the level of growth hormone in some patients with acromegaly. One may notice an improvement in some symptoms, and there should often be a change in the blood tests if they are used to monitor a condition.

High values of prolactin in women often result in menstrual abnormalities - irregular, light or absent periods - or inappropriate lactation: therefore the periods might return to normal and lactation may stop, fertility can be restored. It is important not to take the contraceptive pill unless your doctor has said it is safe to do so, therefore other forms of contraception may be necessary, such as a coil, or a cap or sheath with contraceptive jelly. If you are not sure about this it is essential that you ask your doctor.

Male patients may notice an improvement in potency and fertility can also improve if it had been affected.

Acromegaly is often associated with excess sweating, headaches and increased hand and foot size, all of which may improve on these drugs.

Common side effects of these drugs are **nausea, dizziness on standing or headache**. These side effects tend to improve with time. Your doctor might try to reduce the chance of these side effects by having you start taking a small dose of the drug last thing at night, with a snack, and increase the dose slowly until you are taking the full amount. If nausea or dizziness occur increase the dose more slowly. Do not take anti-sickness drugs while taking these drugs as many of them block the beneficial effect of the drug. Other side effects: abdominal discomfort, nasal congestion, constipation and even diarrhoea, are occasionally reported by patients taking cabergoline.

Cabergoline and bromocriptine should be taken with a meal.

When the instructions say 'take last thing at night with a snack' it means get ready for bed, take half a glass of milk and half a sandwich; take the tablet; take the remainder of the sandwich and milk. Brush your teeth and immediately lie down.

Rare, but important side effects of bromocriptine and cabergoline (and all the dopamine agonists):

Impulse control disorders - including pathological gambling, binge eating and hypersexuality. You and your carers must be aware of this. If this side effect occurs the drug will usually be withdrawn, or dose reduced, until the symptoms resolve.

The following side effects have only occurred in patients taking dopamine agonists for Parkinson's disease - in that condition, the usual doses are over ten times higher than in endocrine practice.

Fibrotic reactions - dopamine agonists are used in much higher doses in the treatment of Parkinson's disease, in some patients in that condition fibrotic reactions have occurred in the lungs, behind the abdominal organs or around the heart. They have not occurred in patients receiving small doses in endocrinology but as patients might be taking the drug for many years it is better to be aware of the side effect. Your doctor will normally do an ultrasound of the heart (an echocardiogram) before starting treatment to make sure the heart valves are functioning normally. Your doctor might also occasionally want to check your kidney function, how sticky your blood is (an erythrocyte sedimentation rate) or perform a chest X-ray; occasionally, if long term treatment with higher doses is required lung function tests may also be helpful.

You must report breathlessness, persistent cough, chest pain, cardiac failure, abdominal pain or tenderness.

Driving and sudden onset of sleep - excessive daytime sleepiness and sudden onset of sleep can very rarely occur, you need to be aware of this and should exercise caution when driving or operating machinery. Those who experience this side effect should stop driving or operating heavy machinery until these effects have stopped.

Pregnancy - If you are pregnant, trying to become, or might become pregnant, you must let your doctor know. Your doctor may ask you to discontinue cabergoline one month before you become pregnant. Your doctor will often prescribe bromocriptine.

Breast feeding - Dopamine agonists suppress lactation and are usually stopped during breast feeding. Your doctor may wish some patients to

continue them and will usually want to discuss the matter with you.

Drug interactions - do not take cabergoline or bromocriptine while taking the antibiotics erythromycin or clarithromycin without discussing it with your doctor first.

In case of problems ring Dr Philip Kelly on 020 3299 6085

Every effort is made to ensure that this health and medication advice is accurate and up to date. It is for information only and supports your consultation it does not obviate the need for that consultation and should not replace a visit to your doctor or health care professional.

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