Information for Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN)

This leaflet tells you about the use of Glyceryl Trinitrate (often referred to as GTN) for angina.

What is angina?

Angina is any uncomfortable feeling felt as a response to a reduced oxygen supply to the heart muscle. It is generally associated with increased activity or emotional stress, when the heart needs more oxygen as it is beating faster.

Angina does not damage the heart

The symptoms of angina often include a pain, tightness, heaviness or discomfort. It is usually felt in one or more of the following places:

- Across the centre of the chest
- In either or both of the shoulders
- Between the shoulder blades
- In the neck or jaw
- Down one or both arms and in the hands

What is Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN)?

- Glyceryl Trinitrate is a fast acting nitrate. It widens the coronary arteries to improve the oxygen supply to the heart muscle.
- GTN comes as a spray or tablet. It is taken under the tongue and takes effect within two to three minutes, but the tablets are not effective if swallowed
- GTN is usually supplied in spray form and lasts up to three years
- GTN tablets can be a useful alternative if you are sensitive to GTN spray
- GTN tablets should be stored in their original container, in a cool dry place. Tablets should not be transferred from the original container to another bottle. Once the bottle has been opened, it must be replaced in eight weeks.
- GTN is not addictive or habit forming
- GTN can also be purchased from a chemist without a prescription
- You should carry your GTN with you at all times
- Do not share your medication with anyone else
- If you find the need to take GTN more often, you should make an appointment to see your GP as soon as possible

How to use GTN

- If you have an episode of angina, stop whatever you are doing, and if possible sit down
- Use your GTN and rest for 5 minutes
- If you are still in pain, take a second GTN and rest for 5 minutes
- If there is no improvement call for help
- Dial 999 and ask for an ambulance speak slowly and clearly
- If at anytime you experience increased chest pain, breathlessness or sweating, call 999 straight away
- GTN can be taken before you do anything that you know will cause angina
- In cold or windy weather you may find it useful to take GTN before going outside

Side effects

- Headache
- Flushing
- Dizziness and fainting
Glyceryl Trinitrate for Angina

Cardiology