

Low Dose Naltrexone (LDN) for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Dysautonomia

What is LDN?

Low Dose Naltrexone (LDN) is a medication being studied for its potential benefits in managing symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and dysautonomia. At low doses, naltrexone is thought to have anti-inflammatory effects and may help regulate the immune system.

How LDN May Work

LDN is believed to work by:

- Reducing inflammation in the body
- Modulating the immune system
- Potentially improving neurotransmitter function

These effects may help alleviate symptoms associated with CFS and dysautonomia, such as fatigue, pain, and autonomic dysfunction.

Off-Label Use

LDN use for CFS and dysautonomia is considered "off-label." This means:

- The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has not specifically approved LDN for these conditions
- Its use is based on emerging research and clinical experience
- It is not listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for these conditions, which may affect its affordability
- The evidence base is still developing, and more research is needed

Dosing Information and Titration Schedule

- Starting dose: Usually 0.5-1 mg daily
- Titration: Gradual increase over several weeks

Detailed Titration Schedule

- Week 1: Start with 0.5 mg daily
- Week 2: If well-tolerated, increase to 1 mg daily
- Week 3: If well-tolerated, increase to 1.5 mg daily
- Week 4: If well-tolerated, increase to 2 mg daily
- Week 5: If well-tolerated, increase to 2.5 mg daily
- Week 6: If well-tolerated, increase to 3 mg daily
- Week 7-8: If well-tolerated, increase to 3.5-4.5 mg daily as directed by your doctor

Important Notes on Titration:

- If you experience worsening of symptoms after a dose increase, return to the previous lower dose that was most effective and notify your prescribing doctor immediately.
- Your doctor may adjust this schedule based on your individual response and tolerance.
- It's crucial to maintain open communication with your healthcare provider throughout the titration process.

When to Consider Stopping LDN

- If you haven't experienced any noticeable benefits after reaching a stable dose and maintaining it for 2-3 months, consult with your doctor about whether to continue the medication.
- Your doctor may recommend a trial period of gradually tapering off the medication to assess any changes in your symptoms.
- Remember, the decision to stop or continue LDN should always be made in consultation with your healthcare provider.

Key Points

1. Individualised approach: Your doctor will adjust the dose based on your response and side effects.
2. Compounded medication: LDN is usually prepared by a compounding pharmacy to allow for precise dosing.
3. Patience is key: It may take several weeks at the target dose to assess full effects.
4. Consistency matters: Take LDN at the same time each day for best results.

Potential Benefits

Patients with CFS and dysautonomia may experience:

- Reduced fatigue
- Improved sleep quality
- Better cognitive function
- Decreased pain
- Improved mood

Note that individual responses can vary, and not all patients will experience these benefits.

Potential Side Effects

Common side effects may include:

- Vivid dreams or sleep disturbances (often temporary)
- Headache

- Nausea
- Mild anxiety or irritability
- Less common side effects:
 - Dizziness
 - Dry mouth
 - Muscle or joint pain

Most side effects are mild and often resolve within a few weeks.

Drug Interactions

LDN may interact with:

- Opioid medications (including some cough medicines)
- Immunosuppressants
- Some antidepressants

Always inform your doctor about all medications and supplements you're taking.

Long-Term Use

- Long-term safety data for LDN is limited but generally positive
- Regular follow-ups with your doctor are important
- Blood tests may be conducted periodically to monitor liver function
- Some patients report sustained benefits with long-term use, while others may need to adjust dosing over time

Important Notes

- Always follow your doctor's specific instructions.
- Report any concerning side effects to your healthcare provider.
- Do not attempt to prepare LDN at home without explicit guidance from your doctor.
- Discuss the potential benefits and risks with your healthcare provider.

For any questions or concerns, please consult your healthcare provider.