

INOCA Patient Summary Sheet on GTN **(including hints and tips from INOCA patients)**

Nothing in this document should be considered in any way as any form of medical advice or recommendation. This document is simply a summary sheet written in easy to understand, non-technical language about using fast acting GTN and includes a collection of hints and tips shared by INOCA patients in the hope of helping other INOCA patients.

As with any medication, only take GTN if it has been prescribed for you by your doctor as not all medications are suitable for everyone.

What is GTN spray/tablet



GTN is an angina medication containing the active ingredient Glyceryl Trinitrate. Glyceryl Trinitrate belongs to a group of medicines called nitrates. Nitrates help to relax the muscle walls of blood vessels allowing them to widen and to help increase blood flow to the heart. This reduces how hard the heart must work to pump blood around the body.

Fast acting GTN comes in the form of a spray or a tablet. Both types of GTN start to work very quickly (usually within around 15-30 seconds). Fast acting GTN is known as a rescue medication because it is designed to be used when having a severe angina attack.

Fast acting GTN, whether spray or tablet, can also be used to help prevent angina symptoms from triggering or from escalating by using prior to exposure to triggers - before exercising for example.

Fast acting GTN spray and GTN tablet are both also known as sublingual medications. This means that they need to be administered under the tongue.

Common triggers for angina can include physical effort, emotional stress, and exposure to cold, but there are many other possible triggers for angina, particularly in the case of INOCA, so it is important to note that everyone is different and that triggers may not be the same for everyone.



Using a GTN Spray.

Hold the spray in front of your mouth with your finger gently resting on the top of the spray nozzle. Take a deep breath. Then open your mouth and lift your tongue up out of the way.

- Holding the spray approximately 3 to 4 cm away from your mouth, spray the GTN under your tongue by pressing the nozzle firmly once or twice (in line with the dosage advised by your own doctor). Do not breathe in while in the process of spraying the GTN.
- Immediately close your mouth after spraying and breathe through your nose with your mouth closed for a minute or so if you can
- Remember to sit for a while if possible and to get up slowly when you feel you are ready.

Using a GTN tablet



- Open your mouth and lift your tongue up out of the way.
- Put ONE tablet under your tongue then lower your tongue and close your mouth.
- Let the tablet dissolve under your tongue naturally.

Leaflets enclosed with GTN Rescue medication often recommend administering one, two or three doses of GTN at 5 minute intervals to relieve a severe angina attack. However, INOCA patients can sometimes need further doses of GTN medication to settle their angina, so it is very important to discuss the dose that is right for you, with your own doctor /care team.

If at any time you experience symptoms that are new to you or symptoms that do not resolve after 3 doses over a 15 minute period, (or after following the dosage advice of your own doctor), please always seek medical help/call 999.

Hints and Tips from INOCA patients who use GTN spray/tablets

1. Try to keep a GTN spray/tablets with you or within easy reach.

Here are some examples of places where INOCA patients have found it useful to keep a spare -

- In their coat pocket
- Bag
- Lanyard around their neck
- Car (if temperatures in the car are consistently BELOW 25°C / 77°F)
- Bathroom
- Bedside table
- By the front door

2. Things to consider before using your GTN spray or tablet.



Check the expiry Date - Always check that your medication is in date. GTN spray can have a shelf life of up to 3 years (the date can usually be seen on the bottom of the cannister), but GTN tablets tend to lose effectiveness just 8 weeks after opening the bottle, so it is important to check the dates.

Sit Down - Using GTN medication can sometimes make blood pressure drop and can make you feel dizzy or faint, so please remember to take this medication when sitting down if possible.

Headaches - Some patients experience headaches when taking this medication. This is because as well as relaxing and widening the muscle walls of blood vessels in and around the heart, GTN medication also has this same effect on blood vessels to the brain. For those who get a headache from using GTN medication the headache can be very unpleasant. It is not usually anything to worry about, but always speak with your doctor or get medical advice if you are concerned in any way. If you do experience headaches when taking GTN spray or tablets it may help to take a pain-relieving tablet such as paracetamol (if you are able to do so). This may help make any headache less severe.

Priming the Spray - If you have not used your GTN spray for a few days it can be a good idea to spray it once into the air avoiding people, pets, and furniture, so the spray is ready to use when needed.

Know your spray -

Both sprays pictured below are fast acting GTN sprays, but patients report experiencing slight differences between the two.



The spray in the white canister apparently takes effect a fraction quicker than the red one, but it can also be a little harsher to take.



The spray in the red bottle apparently takes a fraction longer to work but is gentler to take and has a minty taste to it.

Please remember that it is very important you read the information leaflet that is included with your spray. This contains important information about precautions, possible side effects and more. You can also ask your Doctor, Pharmacist, or care team if you need more information.