



New Treatment for Migraine

The FDA just approved a new medication for the acute treatment of migraine. It is called Treximet and is a combination of Imitrex (a migraine specific medication) and Naproxen (an NSAID: Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication). Treximet is the first drug of its kind on the market and represents an advancement in the acute treatment of migraine. It is now available in pharmacies.

Why was this combination brought to market?

To answer this question we need to look at what occurs during a migraine attack. Migraine is a neurovascular event and involves the release of neurochemical transmitters such as CGRP and Substance P. These neurotransmitters cause inflammation and vasodilation of blood vessels surrounding our brain. The triptans (Imitrex; Relpax; Maxalt; Axert; Zomig; Frova; Amerge) prevent the release of these neurotransmitters and in turn, prevents the involvement of the blood vessels. They are most effective if taken early in this process.

We have now discovered another pathway involved in migraine that consists of the production and release of prostaglandin. The NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications) inhibit prostaglandin production and release and include medications such as Motrin, Aleve, Advil, and Naprosyn.

Therefore, it makes sense to combine these 2 drugs to attack the multiple pathways involved in migraine. The combination should potentially be more effective than either agent alone.

Why not just take an OTC NSAID like Aleve or Advil with a triptan?

Taking the NSAID such as Aleve with the triptan may not be as effective. From extensive research studies and clinical trials, a unique pharmacokinetic profile is seen with the combination tablet. The Imitrex portion of the tablet reaches peak levels quickly, providing important initial relief; the Naproxen component of the tablet is delayed and reaches peak levels of concentration later than if given separately. This delayed release of the Naproxen provides the important headache prevention needed as the Imitrex begins wearing off. Therefore, most patients experience initial headache relief within 1-2 hours followed by sustained pain-free results for 24 hours.

Additionally, the combination tablet is convenient and eliminates the need to carry two separate medication bottles. Treximet will be packaged in a quantity of #9 tablets and is in a small container that will easily fit into a woman's purse, e.g.

Who should not take Treximet?

Anyone who has established coronary or peripheral vascular disease should not take Treximet which contains Imitrex, a triptan medication. If an individual has cardiac risk factors such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol, they should be screened prior to triptan use. Anyone with a history of an allergic reaction of any of the triptan medications should not take Treximet. Anyone with a history of an allergy or contraindication to NSAIDs such as avoid the use of Treximet which contains Naproxen, a NSAID. Contraindications would also include gastric ulcer; gastritis/esophagitis; history of gastric bypass; and someone on Coumadin or other blood thinners. Pregnant women should avoid the use of Treximet. Full prescribing information is available at www.treximet.com.

How do I know if I should switch to Treximet? Answer these migraine treatment questions.*

1. Do you want more relief from your migraine medicine?
2. Do you ever need more than one dose of your current medicine to treat your migraines?
3. Do you ever take more than one medication to relieve a single migraine attack?

If your answer was “yes” to 1 or more of these questions, then you may benefit from Treximet. It may provide more complete relief for your migraine headaches. In addition, you may be less likely to re-dose or rescue compared to your current acute headache treatment. Complete relief of head pain and associated symptoms such as nausea within a 2 hour time period is a reasonable expectation followed by sustained pain free for at least 24 hours.

*Migraine Treatment Questionnaire developed by GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceutical and recognized by the National Headache Foundation as an effective way to initiate dialogue between healthcare professionals and patients regarding treatment effectiveness. Printed with permission from GSK Pharmaceutical.

How do I know if Treximet better than my current triptan or other acute headache medication? Answer the following questions.

1. Are you headache free in 2 hours and back to full function?
2. Are there any side-effects on the medication?
3. Do you need to re-dose within 24 hours?
4. Do you have to rescue with another medication?
5. Does the headache stay away completely for at least 24 hours? (Sustained pain-free)

In summary, Treximet is the newest prescription medication on the market for the acute treatment of migraine with or without aura in adults 18 and older. The combination of Imitrex/Naprosyn represents the most migraine specific medication now available. Schedule an appointment with Dr. Hutchinson or your primary care provider to see if Treximet would be right for you.

Sincerely,

Susan Hutchinson, MD Director-Orange County Migraine & Headache Center