

# A Marvellous Guide to Using GTN

*A Patient's  
Guide...*



# WELCOME TO THE PUMPING MARVELLOUS FOUNDATION



The Pumping Marvellous Foundation would like to again thank our Patient Educators who not only suggested this marvellous guide, but also shared their journey of being diagnosed with heart failure and the challenges that they face.

**PLEASE NOTE:** this booklet should not replace and/or substitute the interactions with and advice you are given from your Healthcare Professional. If you have any concerns about your condition then do discuss them with your Healthcare Professional at the earliest opportunity.

## What is GTN?

Glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) is prescribed to relieve angina. Angina is pain, discomfort or tightness in the chest due to narrowing of the arteries supplying the heart muscle with blood (coronary heart disease). The narrowing could be due to a build-up of a fatty substance called atheroma or spasms. When part of your heart muscle does not get as much blood and oxygen as it needs, angina occurs.

GTN comes in tablet and spray formulations that can be put on or under the tongue for quick onset. They are used to provide rapid relief from angina symptoms. They can also be used for when angina pain is expected to happen, such as before exercise that is likely to cause chest pain (for example, before climbing stairs).

GTN works in two ways. It mainly relaxes blood vessels in your body (causing them to widen) and this reduces the strain on your heart, making it easier for your heart to pump blood around your body. It also, to a lesser extent, relaxes and widens blood vessels in your heart (coronary arteries), which increases the flow of blood to your heart muscle.

The following tips for using GTN are adopted with permission from the 'GTN Card Project' by Dr Rani Khatib and the Cardiac Rehab Team at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

# Tips for using GTN Tablets

(Glyceryl Trinitrate Tablets)

## 10 Minute Rule

If you experience chest pain (angina), chest ache or chest discomfort, you should:

- **Stop what you are doing, sit down and rest.**
- **If the pain persists, place one tablet under your tongue and wait 5 minutes.**
- **If the pain is still present, use another tablet and wait 5 minutes.**
- **If the pain is still present, ring 999 and unlock your door.**

If your pain gets severe at any stage, or if you feel unwell (e.g. dizzy, short of breath, sweaty) call 999 immediately.

It is wise to always carry the details of a next of kin should you experience any difficulties.

# Important notes

- **Do not swallow tablets.**
- **Sit down before using as GTN may make you feel lightheaded.**
- **Carry your GTN at all times and don't hesitate to use it.**
- **Keep several GTN bottles, e.g. at home, at work, in a bag.**
- **GTN tablets expire 8 weeks after opening the bottle.**
- **If your mouth is dry, a sip of water helps the tablets dissolve better.**

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# Tips for using GTN Spray

(Glyceryl Trinitrate Spray or Nitrate Spray)

## 10 Minute Rule

If you experience chest pain (angina), chest ache or chest discomfort, you should:

- **Stop what you are doing, sit down and rest.**
- **If the pain persists, use one spray under your tongue and wait 5 minutes.**
- **If the pain is still present, use another spray and wait 5 minutes.**
- **If the pain is still present, ring 999 and unlock your door.**

If your pain gets severe at any stage, or if you feel unwell (e.g. dizzy, short of breath, sweaty) call 999 immediately.

It is wise to always carry the details of a next of kin should you experience any difficulties.

# Important notes

- **GTN should be sprayed under or on your tongue.**
- **Sit down before using as GTN may make you feel lightheaded.**
- **Carry your GTN at all times and don't hesitate to use it.**
- **Keep several GTN bottles, e.g. at home, at work, in a bag.**
- **Your healthcare team may advise two sprays per dose.**
- **If the spray was not used for a long time, spray it in the air a few times before using. (Check expiry date.)**

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# General Pain Management

If you require general pain relief, then consider Paracetamol as prescribed on the packet. Avoid anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen or Diclofenac as they do not interact well with your cardiac condition. For some heart failure patients, other long-term conditions (such as arthritis or peripheral vascular disease) may be painful so always consult with your healthcare professional if you require any further intervention to treat your symptoms.

If you suffer from chest pain and discomfort like angina, please discuss this with your healthcare professional, especially if your symptoms are changing, increasing in frequency or becoming more painful.

As a result of heart failure symptoms, many patients will express feelings of pain and discomfort, particularly if their symptoms are severe. Do discuss your pain symptoms with your healthcare professional as there are a wide range of medications, therapies and interventions that can provide you with effective pain relief.

Please consult with your pharmacist before taking any over the counter medicines.

# Notes

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If you have any concerns or questions,  
get in touch with **Pumping Marvellous**.



*Another Mini Toolkit by  
The Pumping Marvellous Foundation*

*Crowdsourced information from REAL patients.*

*Acknowledgements and thank yous*

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