

Desmopressin (DDAVP)

Information for patients and families

St. Michael's

Inspired Care.
Inspiring Science.

You are taking a medicine called desmopressin, also known as DDAVP. This replaces a pituitary hormone called anti-diuretic hormone (ADH).

Why is desmopressin prescribed for me?

ADH helps your kidneys work to hold onto water. When you don't have enough ADH, your body loses water very quickly when you urinate (pee). You may feel very thirsty. Taking desmopressin helps your body to conserve water. You do not need to urinate (pee) as frequently and you will be less thirsty.

How do I take desmopressin?

Desmopressin is available in several forms.

- A tablet that you take by mouth
- A dissolving tablet that you melt under your tongue
- A spray that you spray into your nose

Your doctor will work with you to choose the best form for you.

Desmopressin is usually taken 2 to 3 times a day. If you miss a dose, skip it and take your usual dose at the next scheduled time. Do **not** make up the missed dose.

My notes:

What are the side effects of desmopressin?

Desmopressin can cause a low sodium level. This is very serious. Some signs of low sodium level are:

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Confusion
- Very dark or very little urine

If you have any of these symptoms, stop using desmopressin and **go to the emergency department right away.**

How can I prevent a low sodium level?

- Only drink when you are thirsty. At social occasions, be careful not to drink too much fluid. If you will have a colonoscopy, let your endocrinologist know. To prepare for a colonoscopy people have to drink a lot of fluid.
- You should have a blood test to check your sodium level soon after you start taking desmopressin. You will need to check your sodium level regularly to make sure it stays normal. Your doctor will let you know when to go for your blood tests.
- Pay attention to how often you urinate. Make sure there are at least a couple of hours each day that you can urinate. This is called a “breakthrough period”.
- If you have vomiting, diarrhea, or heavy sweating contact your doctor. Your dose of desmopressin may need to be adjusted temporarily.
- If you are taking the medicine long term, wear a medic alert bracelet or necklace. This lets others know that you need special treatment during a medical emergency and during surgery. To get one, take the order form to your doctor and ask for help completing it. You can get an order form at your pharmacy or online at www.medicalert.ca.

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Ask your healthcare provider about this information if you have questions.