

Milnacipran

Savella / U.S. fibromyalgia treatment

A twice-daily medicine for fibromyalgia. It is different from levomilnacipran (Fetzima).

From Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC's education collection ·

Draft for review · Clinical content has not been revalidated for this website.

Follow your starter schedule

Keep blood-pressure and pulse checks

Serotonin and norepinephrine transporters are shown. Their separate contributions to pain relief are not established.

What it is used for

Savella is FDA approved for fibromyalgia in adults. It may help pain and day-to-day function. It is not FDA approved for depression or for children.

Milnacipran is also used for depression in some countries. That is a different treatment context; this companion follows U.S. Savella guidance.

How it works

It slows the reuptake of serotonin and norepinephrine, two chemical messengers involved in pain signaling. The full reason it helps fibromyalgia is uncertain.

A diagram cannot predict your response. Review pain, activity and side effects together; a larger dose does not automatically mean better relief.

What to expect over time

STARTING

Your prescriber usually increases the dose over the first week. Follow your own written schedule, especially if you have kidney problems.

EARLY DAYS

Nausea, sweating, dizziness or sleep changes may appear before useful relief. Food can help nausea, although food is not required.

FOLLOW-UP

Benefit can take weeks. Track what you can do as well as pain. Review progress and tolerability before any dose change.

Taking your medication

After the starter schedule, take the prescribed dose twice daily. Do not substitute Fetzima or use someone else's dosing instructions.

Do not drink alcohol. Avoid driving or hazardous tasks until you know how the medicine affects you. Stand up slowly if you feel dizzy.

Check before adding medicines or supplements. Do not stop abruptly or invent an every-other-day taper; ask for a gradual stopping plan.

When to get help

Emergency: fever with agitation, confusion, stiff or twitching muscles, fast heartbeat or diarrhea may be serotonin toxicity. Stop and get urgent help.

Get prompt assessment: yellow skin/eyes, dark urine, trouble passing urine, a racing heart or unusual bleeding. Do not wait for your next visit.

Emergency: seizure, collapse, major bleeding, severe confusion or weakness, sudden eye pain/vision change, or inability to stay safe from self-harm.

Early side effects

Nausea, constipation, dry mouth, sweating, hot flushes and sleep problems can occur. Report symptoms that persist or interfere with daily life.

Other effects to discuss

Discuss sexual changes, ongoing palpitations or urinary difficulty. Blood pressure and pulse can rise even when you feel well; keep monitoring visits.

What to keep track of

Check blood pressure and pulse before and during treatment; kidney function helps set the dose. Sodium tests may be needed. Report worsening mood or suicidal thoughts at any age, especially before age 25 or after dose changes. High or irritable mood with little sleep needs prompt review. Ask someone you trust to notice changes with you.

Before you start

Review kidney/liver disease, alcohol use, high blood pressure, heart disease, seizures, bipolar symptoms, low sodium, bleeding, glaucoma and urinary difficulty. Discuss pregnancy, feeding and all medicines. Severe kidney impairment needs lower dosing; end-stage kidney disease is not recommended. Avoid with chronic liver disease or substantial alcohol use.

Medicines & interactions

MAOI inhibitors

Do not combine or cross-taper. U.S. guidance requires 14 days after an MAOI before Savella and 5 days after Savella before an MAOI. Linezolid and IV methylene blue need urgent, separate planning.

Other serotonin medicines

Antidepressants, tramadol, migraine triptans, lithium, buspirone, amphetamines and St. John's wort can raise serotonin-toxicity risk. Have a clinician check combinations before starting.

Bleeding-risk medicines

Aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen and blood thinners can increase bleeding concerns. Check before using over-the-counter pain medicines; do not stop a prescribed blood thinner yourself.

Heart and blood-pressure drugs

Avoid IV digoxin with Savella. Clonidine may work less well. Medicines that raise blood pressure or pulse need review. Tell emergency teams what you take.

Alcohol and supplements

Avoid alcohol because of liver-injury concerns. List all prescriptions, cold remedies, pain medicines and supplements. Few liver-enzyme interactions does not mean no interactions.

Everyday tips

Track pain, sleep and one meaningful daily activity.

Use manageable movement and pacing with your team.

Keep follow-up and blood-pressure appointments.

Plan refills so treatment does not stop suddenly.

Your questions, answered

What if I miss a dose?

The Savella Medication Guide says to skip the missed dose and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not take two doses together. Ask your pharmacist if several doses are missed.

Can I stop if it is not helping?

Discuss benefit and side effects first. Routine stopping needs a gradual plan to reduce dizziness, nausea, anxiety and other withdrawal effects. A serious reaction needs urgent advice instead.

Does more mean better?

Not necessarily. The usual U.S. target is 100 mg total daily in divided doses; 200 mg did not add average benefit in two trials. Kidney function and tolerability matter. Do not change your dose yourself.

Pregnancy or breastfeeding?

Evidence is limited. Exposure late in pregnancy may affect newborn adjustment and bleeding at delivery. Discuss treatment, feeding and infant monitoring with your team early.

Storage & safety

Store at room temperature away from excess heat and moisture, secured from children and pets. Never share. For suspected overdose call Poison Help, 1-800-222-1222, right away; do not induce vomiting. Call 911 for seizure, collapse, severe breathing trouble or imminent self-harm. In the U.S., 988 also provides crisis support.

A final reminder

Read the full Savella guide and follow your prescriber.

About this information

For general information only; not a substitute for individualized medical advice. This sheet does not cover every risk or interaction. Ask your prescriber or pharmacist before changing how you take this medication.

Sources

1. https://www.rxabbvie.com/content/dam/rxabbvie/pdf/savella_pi.pdf
 2. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a609016.html>
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Educational inclusion does not mean this medication or its indications are treated at this practice. Review the guide for your exact product with your prescriber or pharmacist.

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