



Triptans are effective medicines used to treat migraine headaches. They significantly reduce pain within two hours for most people. Complete relief is less common, but if you take a triptan early during a migraine attack you may have a better outcome.

To help you and your doctor choose the right triptan if you need one, *Consumer Reports* has evaluated the drugs in this category based on their effectiveness, safety, and cost. This 2-page brief is a summary of a 21-page report you can access on the Internet at ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs. You can also learn about other drugs we've analyzed on this *free* Web site.

DO YOU NEED A TRIPTAN?

If you have mild and less frequent migraine attacks, try other pain relievers first, including acetaminophen (Tylenol and generics); nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil and generics) or naproxen (Aleve and generics); or combination products that contain acetaminophen, aspirin, and caffeine (Excedrin Extra Strength, Excedrin Migraine, and generics).

If your migraines are moderate to severe in pain intensity, and/or disrupt your life, you might benefit from a triptan.

Our Recommendations

The seven available triptans (plus one combination pill) differ in their effectiveness and the side effects they cause. They are expensive (only one, sumatriptan, is available as a generic), ranging from \$20 to \$43 per pill. The nasal spray and injectable forms cost more.

For people with moderate to severe migraine pain and symptoms, we have chosen as our *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drug*:

- Sumatriptan (generic) tablets, nasal spray, and injectable forms
- Sumatriptan is the only triptan available as a less expensive generic, and studies have found that it is as effective as or better than most of the other triptans. If sumatriptan doesn't work for you, we recommend trying rizatriptan (Maxalt).

Triptans temporarily narrow blood vessels, so they should not be taken by people with certain conditions, including coronary artery disease or angina (chest pain), diabetes, and peripheral vascular disease. People who have had a heart attack or stroke, those who have uncontrolled high blood pressure, and those who smoke should also avoid triptans, as should people who have migraines that are accompanied by weakness or paralysis in an arm or leg, vertigo, ringing in the ears, or speech difficulties. Read the package insert that comes with the drug for other precautions.

This report was updated in May 2010.








Our independent evaluations are based on scientific reviews conducted by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. Grants from the Engelberg Foundation and the National Library of Medicine help fund *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs*. These materials were made possible by a grant from the state Attorney General Consumer and Prescriber Education Grant Program, which is funded by the multi-state settlement of consumer fraud claims regarding the marketing of the prescription drug Neurontin (gabapentin).

Frequency of Triptan Side Effects*

Generic Name and Dose (Brand Name)*	Any Adverse Event Experienced	Chest Pain/Tightness	Dizziness	Numbness +Tingling	Sleepiness	Fatigue
Almotriptan 12.5 mg (Axert)	9% to 19%	Less than 1%	Less than 2%	Less than 1%	Less than 1%	Less than 2%
Eletriptan 40 mg (Relpax)	27% to 47%	1% to 7%	1% to 7%	1% to 2%	2% to 7%	3% to 7%
Frovatriptan 2.5 mg (Frova)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Naratriptan 2.5 mg (Amerge)	22% to 29%	2%	2% to 5%	—	1% to 4%	2% to 5%
Rizatriptan 10 mg (Maxalt)	18% to 48%	1% to 3%	5% to 6%	4%	2% to 9%	2% to 8%
Sumatriptan 100 mg (Imitrex)	22% to 60%	1% to 7%	2% to 10%	2% to 7%	2% to 7%	3% to 11%
Sumatriptan injection 6 mg (Imitrex)	66%	—	2% to 8%	—	—	—
Zolmitriptan 5 mg (Zomig)	38% to 58%	1% to 5%	2% to 6%	5% to 7%	5% to 8%	7% to 11%
Sumatriptan/naproxen 85 mg/500 mg (Treximet)	26% to 27%	Less than 2%	3% to 5%	2% to 3%	3% to 4%	—

* For selected common doses only. Smaller doses would be expected to cause fewer side effects. A dash means data not available. Ranges are given because study findings vary.

Triptans cost chart

Generic Name and Dose	Brand Name	Maximum Allowed Dose per 24 Hours	Price per Dose ¹	Average Monthly Cost ¹ (If 2 migraines per month and take one dose per attack)	Average Monthly Cost ¹ (If 2 migraines per month and take maximum allowed amount over 24 hours)
Almotriptan tablet 6.25 mg	Axert	25 mg	\$33	\$66	\$264
Almotriptan tablet 12.5 mg	Axert	25 mg	\$31	\$62	\$124
Eletriptan tablet 20 mg	Relpax	80 mg	\$34	\$68	\$272
Eletriptan tablet 40 mg	Relpax	80 mg	\$32	\$64	\$128
Frovatriptan tablet 2.5 mg	Frova	7.5 mg	\$37	\$74	\$222
Naratriptan tablet 1 mg	Amerge	5 mg	\$36	\$72	\$360
Naratriptan tablet 2.5 mg	Amerge	5 mg	\$43	\$86	\$172
Rizatriptan tablet 5 mg	Maxalt	30 mg	\$38	\$76	\$456
Rizatriptan tablet 10 mg	Maxalt	30 mg	\$37	\$74	\$222
Rizatriptan dissolvable tablet 5 mg	Maxalt MLT	30 mg	\$35	\$70	\$420
Rizatriptan dissolvable tablet 10 mg	Maxalt MLT	30 mg	\$35	\$70	\$210
 Sumatriptan nasal spray 5 mg	Generic	40 mg	\$47	\$94	\$752
Sumatriptan nasal spray 5 mg	Imitrex	40 mg	\$62	\$124	\$992
 Sumatriptan nasal spray 20 mg	Generic	40 mg	\$44	\$88	\$176
Sumatriptan nasal spray 20 mg	Imitrex	40 mg	\$61	\$122	\$244
 Sumatriptan tablet 25 mg	Generic	200 mg	\$24	\$48	\$384
Sumatriptan tablet 25 mg	Imitrex	200 mg	\$39	\$78	\$624
 Sumatriptan tablet 50 mg	Generic	200 mg	\$22	\$44	\$176
Sumatriptan tablet 50 mg	Imitrex	200 mg	\$37	\$74	\$296
 Sumatriptan tablet 100 mg	Generic	200 mg	\$20	\$40	\$80
Sumatriptan tablet 100 mg	Imitrex	200 mg	\$37	\$74	\$148
 Sumatriptan injectable 6 mg	Generic	12 mg	\$113	\$226	\$452
Sumatriptan injectable 6 mg	Imitrex	12 mg	\$136	\$272	\$544
 Sumatriptan pen injectable 6 mg	Generic	12 mg	\$124	\$248	\$496
Sumatriptan pen injectable 6 mg	Imitrex	12 mg	\$146	\$292	\$584
Sumatriptan needleless injectable 6 mg	Sumavel dosePro	12 mg	\$129	\$258	\$516
Zolmitriptan tablet 2.5 mg	Zomig	10 mg	\$37	\$74	\$296
Zolmitriptan tablet 5 mg	Zomig	10 mg	\$38	\$76	\$152
Zolmitriptan dissolvable tablet 2.5 mg	Zomig ZMT	10 mg	\$34	\$68	\$272
Zolmitriptan dissolvable tablet 5 mg	Zomig ZMT	10 mg	\$39	\$78	\$156
Zolmitriptan nasal spray 5 mg	Zomig	10 mg	\$53	\$106	\$212
Fixed-Dose Combination Products					
Sumatriptan/naproxen sodium 85 mg/500 mg	Treximet	170 mg/1,000 mg	\$29	\$58	\$116

1. Prices per dose and monthly costs are derived from national average retail costs for March 2010, rounded to the nearest dollar. Information is derived by *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Pharma Solutions. Wolters Kluwer is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.

NOTE: The information contained in the *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs™* reports is for general informational purposes and is not intended to replace consultation with a physician or other health care professional. Consumers Union is not liable for any loss or injury related to your use of the reports. The reports are intended solely for individual, non-commercial use and may not be used in advertising, promotion, or for any other commercial purpose.