

Propranolol (Pro-pran-o-lol)

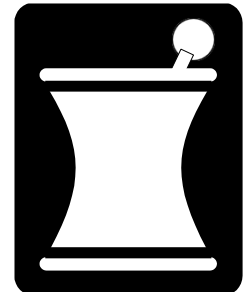
Patient Information - Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy

Why have I been prescribed propranolol?

Propranolol can have several uses. Usually it is used to treat heart and blood pressure problems. Propranolol can also help prevent migraine.

It can also help control some of the more physical symptoms of anxiety. These include mild shaking, a tremor, a racing heart beat and sweating. The more you have of these symptoms, the more anxious you may feel. Propranolol can reduce these and help break this “vicious circle”.

Finally, some antipsychotic medicines can make people feel “restless”. People complain of struggling to sit still and wanting to pace about all the time. This is called akathisia. Some antidepressants can also cause akathisia, but this is very rare. Propranolol helps to relieve this side effect.



What exactly is propranolol?

Propranolol belongs to a group of medicines called ‘beta-blockers’. It has been around for 50 years or so and millions of people have now taken it. Most people find that propranolol helps some of their symptoms. If it doesn’t help much, other options are available.

Is propranolol safe to take?

It is usually safe to take propranolol regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but it doesn’t suit everyone. Let your doctor know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have a history of asthma, are diabetic, or suffer from heart, liver or kidney trouble, or have a condition called phaeochromocytoma.
- If you are taking any other medication. This includes any other drugs used to lower blood pressure.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding or wish to become pregnant.

What is the usual dose of propranolol?

The dose for anxiety or akathisia is usually 20 mg to 80 mg a day. It is usually divided into two or three doses each day.

How should I take propranolol and what should I do if I miss a dose?

Look at the label on your medicine; it should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow these directions carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

Never change your dose or stop taking your propranolol without checking with your doctor. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time.

What will happen to me when I start taking propranolol?

Your feelings of restlessness or anxiety should go away, although this may take a few days. The full effect may take up to a week or so to come about. You might get some side effects from propranolol. Most of these are quite mild and should go away after a week or so. Look at the table on the next page. It tells you what to do if you get any side effects. There are many other possible side effects. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.

Are there any medicines I should avoid or take care with?

Always tell your doctor what you are taking and ask your pharmacist before you buy any 'over-the-counter' medicines. Do not take indigestion remedies, iron or calcium preparations within two hours of taking your propranolol.

When I feel better, can I stop taking it?

You and your doctor should decide together when you can come off your propranolol. It is unwise to stop this medicine suddenly. Some people find that after a few months, they can stop taking it and the original side effects don't come back.

Propranolol is not addictive.

| SIDE EFFECT | WHAT IS IT? | WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THIS HAPPENS TO ME? |
|------------------|--|---|
| Common | | |
| Cold extremities | Your toes and fingers feel cold. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away. | If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly. |
| Fatigue | You feel tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away. | If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly. |
| Uncommon | | |
| Bradycardia | A very slow pulse (under 50 beats per minute). | Contact your doctor now. |
| Chest pain | A tightness in your chest which won't go away. | Contact your doctor now. |

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|------------------------|---|--|
| Dizziness | Feeling light-headed and faint, especially when you stand up. | Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Don't drive. |
| Sexual dysfunction | Lack of libido or no interest in sex. Inability to maintain an erection or have an orgasm. | Discuss this with your doctor when you next meet. |
| Sleep disturbances | You can't sleep very well and may have nightmares. | If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. |
| Stomach upset | This includes feeling sick or getting diarrhoea. | If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. |
| Wheeziness | When you find it difficult to breathe and your chest feels tight. This may happen if you have asthma. | Contact your doctor now. |
| Rare | | |
| Dry eyes | Your eyes feel dry. | Contact your doctor. |
| Skin trouble or rashes | For example, a rash or itching that you have not had before, or any psoriasis gets worse. | Contact your doctor now. |

Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet, you may find a lot of information there as well but be careful as internet-based information is not always accurate.

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