

Ziprasidone

Patient Information - Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy

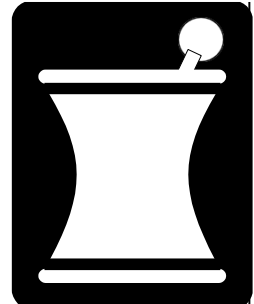
Why have I been prescribed ziprasidone?

Ziprasidone is used to treat schizophrenia, psychosis and similar conditions. It has also used to treat agitation in dementia, mania and anxiety.

When people have schizophrenia, some people hear voices talking to them or about them. They may also become suspicious or paranoid. Some people also have problems with their thinking and feel that other people can read their thoughts. These are called “positive symptoms”.

Ziprasidone can help to relieve these symptoms. Many people with schizophrenia also experience “negative symptoms”. They feel tired and lacking in energy and may become quite inactive and withdrawn. Ziprasidone may help relieve these symptoms as well.

Ziprasidone may also be prescribed for people who have had side effects such as unusual movements or shaking or increased levels of the hormone prolactin with other types of antipsychotic medicines. Ziprasidone is less likely to cause weight gain than some antipsychotics.



What exactly is ziprasidone?

Ziprasidone is one of a group of medicines used to treat schizophrenia and similar disorders.

These illnesses are sometimes referred to as psychoses, hence the name given to this group of medicines, which is the “antipsychotics”.

Is ziprasidone safe to have?

It is usually safe to have ziprasidone 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 Parkinson's disease or suffer from liver or kidney trouble.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.
- If you are elderly or have suffered a stroke.
- If you have any heart problems, e.g. an irregular heart rhythm, heart failure or a recent heart attack.

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

Ziprasidone is best taken with food. It is normally taken with breakfast and with the evening meal.

Look at the label on your medicine, it should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow this advice carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse. Never change your dose without consulting 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 ziprasidone?

Antipsychotics do not work straight away and it may take several days or even weeks for some of the symptoms to reduce. To begin with, most people find that this medication will help them feel more relaxed and calmer. Later, after one or two weeks, other symptoms should begin to improve. Unfortunately, you might get some side effects before you start to feel any better. Most side effects should go away after a few weeks.

Look at the table over the page. It tells you what to do if you get any of the usual side effects. Not everyone will get the side effects shown. 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 consult with your doctor or pharmacist before starting a new medicine or purchasing over the counter. Ziprasidone when combined with some other medicines can cause unpleasant side effects. Some heart medicines need to be adjusted carefully when used in combination with ziprasidone.

When I feel better, can I stop taking ziprasidone?

No. If you stop taking ziprasidone, your original symptoms may return, but this may not be for three to six months after you stop the drug. You and your doctor should decide together when you can come off it. Most people need to be on ziprasidone for quite a long time, sometimes years. This is not thought to be harmful. Ziprasidone is not addictive.

What about alcohol and marijuana?

It is recommended that people taking ziprasidone do not drink alcohol, use marijuana or other recreational drugs. These taken with ziprasidone can make some people drowsy. They can lessen the effect of ziprasidone and add to side effects of clumsiness which can lead to falls or accidents. As well as this, using recreational drugs can make your psychosis worse.

Once you are used to your ziprasidone you can sometimes drink alcohol in small amounts without any harm. If you want a drink, try a glass of your normal drink and see how you feel. If it doesn't make you feel drowsy and clumsy, it is probably okay to drink small amounts. It pays to be cautious because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication.

It is recognised that many road accidents occur because of mixing alcohol, marijuana or other recreational drugs with these medicines. Don't stop taking ziprasidone just because you fancy a joint, a drink or a party pill at the weekend.

What is the metabolic syndrome?

Antipsychotics can occasionally cause something called the metabolic syndrome. This is a combination of weight gain, raised cholesterol and raised blood sugars. Some antipsychotics are more likely to cause the metabolic syndrome than others.

When you start an antipsychotic, your weight, height and waist will be measured. A recording of your heart called an ECG and a number of blood tests will be performed. These will be repeated several times during the first year that you are on an antipsychotic to ensure that you remain healthy. It is important when you start an antipsychotic that you eat a healthy diet and that you do some exercise. Talk to your case manager or doctor for advice about this. They may also offer to refer you to a dietitian.

SIDE EFFECT	WHAT IS IT?	WHAT SHOULD I DO IF IT HAPPENS TO ME?
Common		
Drowsiness	Feeling sleepy or sluggish.	Don't drive or use machinery. As your treatment continues you should feel less drowsy. Ask your doctor if you can take your ziprasidone at a different time of day.
Postural Hypotension	A low blood pressure. You may feel faint when you stand up.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive.
Nausea and Diarrhoea	The feeling in your stomach when you think you are about to vomit and loose bowel motions	This should wear off fairly quickly. Taking each dose with food may help. If it is bad, contact your doctor.
Fairly Common		
Akathisia	You feel restless, unable to feel comfortable unless you are moving.	Tell your doctor about this. It may be possible to change your drug or dose or give you something to reduce these feelings.
Agitation or anxiety	Being more on edge.	Discuss relaxation methods with your doctor.
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus properly.	See your doctor if you are worried. You won't need glasses.
Constipation	Feeling "bunged up" inside. You may find it difficult to pass a bowel motion.	Eat more fibre, e.g. bran and vegetables. Spend more time walking. Make sure you drink plenty of fluid. A mild laxative from a pharmacy might help.
Insomnia	Not being able to get to sleep at night.	Discuss this with your doctor who may be able to change your dose time.

Movement Disorders	Feeling shaky or having a tremor. Your neck may twist back. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own.	If it is bad or worries you, tell your doctor. They can give you something for it.
SIDE EFFECT	WHAT IS IT?	WHAT SHOULD I DO IF IT HAPPENS TO ME?
Uncommon		
Dry mouth	Your mouth will feel dry and you will not produce much saliva (spit). Dry mouth can cause problems with speech, taste, chewing and swallowing. It can also increase the risk of getting dental decay and infection in your mouth.	To help prevent dental problems sip water regularly to moisten your mouth. Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Avoid sugary drinks and snacks between meals. Try sugar free chewing gum to stimulate saliva or discuss using an oral lubricant with your pharmacist or dentist.
Rare		
Allergic reactions	A sudden onset of skin rash, itching, swelling of face, lips and tongue, difficulty breathing.	Contact your doctor or the emergency department immediately and tell them you may be having an allergic reaction.
Heart arrhythmias	A change in the way that your heart beats.	Contact your doctor or emergency department immediately if you feel a change in the way your heart normally beats (palpitations).
NMS	Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome includes a high body temperature, muscle stiffness and being unable to move.	It usually occurs within a few weeks of a dose change. Contact your doctor immediately. If you have a high temperature and/or become very stiff, keep cool with fans or cool water.
Priapism	In men, a persistent painful erection of the penis which occurs without sexual arousal.	Tell your doctor about this if it is a problem.
Seizures	Having fits or a blackout.	Stop taking your ziprasidone and 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. Be careful as internet-based information is not always accurate.

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