

# Zotepine

(pronounced zot-a-peen)

## Why has zotepine been prescribed?

Zotepine is an antipsychotic used to treat schizophrenia. It appears to be free of some of the side effects seen with other antipsychotics. Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis. They also shorten the time to recovery and help prevent relapses.

## Are there any precautions with zotepine?

Zotepine is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe zotepine, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you have epilepsy, glaucoma or suffer from liver, heart or kidney trouble
- b) if you are taking any other medication, especially anticonvulsants or tablets for blood pressure or a heart condition. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines.
- c) if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

## What is the usual dose of zotepine?

The starting dose is usually 25mg three times a day. This is sometimes increased slowly over a few weeks. The usual dose of zotepine may be between 75mg and 300mg a day. It may take a few weeks to get to the dose that is most suitable.

## How should zotepine be taken?

Zotepine is usually taken three times a day. The dosing schedule will be carefully chosen for you.

## What form does zotepine come in?

Zotepine is available only in tablet form. The tablets are available as 25mg, 50mg and 100mg.

## What should be done if a dose is missed?

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. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the usual dose. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

## What will happen when zotepine is first taken?

Zotepine, like many medicines, does not work straightaway. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. To begin with, some people find that zotepine may help them feel calmer and more relaxed. Later, (usually in two or three weeks) other symptoms should begin to improve. Unfortunately, some people get side effects before starting to feel better. However, most side effects will lessen and should go away after a few weeks. The table below lists some of the side effects associated with zotepine. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

## Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0800 100 3352 or go to [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

## Summary of side effects

Side effect	How common is it?	What can be done about it?		
Drowsiness	Very Common	This tends to wear off. Tell your prescriber if this persists.		
Agitation and anxiety (also known as akathisia)	Common	Another medicine maybe prescribed to treat this. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.		
Menstrual changes (women) – periods may stop	Common	Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect		
Weight gain	Common	Some people put on a few pounds. Try to eat healthily and take exercise. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.		
Low blood pressure	Common	This can be troublesome when standing up. You may feel dizzy or faint. This tends to wear off in time.		
Impotence (men) – difficulty in getting an erection	Uncommon	Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect		
Constipation	Uncommon	Eat lots of fibre - fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. Your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.		
Breast growth and milk production (men and women)	Rare	Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect		
Movement disorders – trembling, muscle spasms	Rare	Another medicine may be prescribed to treat this. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.		
Abnormal movements (also known as tardive dyskinesia)	Rare	This occurs only after long term treatment. It usually begins with unusual movements of the mouth and tongue. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.		
<i>Very common = almost everyone affected</i>	<i>Common = many people affected</i>	<i>Uncommon = some people affected</i>	<i>Rare = few people affected</i>	<i>Very rare = very few people affected</i>

### Is zotepine addictive?

No, zotepine is not addictive. However, if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings.

### What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking zotepine should not drink alcohol. This is because both antipsychotics and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make psychosis worse. However, once people are used to taking medication, then very small amounts of alcohol may not be harmful. It pays to be very careful, because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

### Is it OK to stop taking zotepine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking zotepine, your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to be on zotepine for quite a long time, sometimes years. You should always discuss any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines with your prescriber.

### Are there any alternatives to zotepine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Overall, antipsychotics have broadly similar therapeutic effects, except for clozapine which is effective when other antipsychotics have failed. Antipsychotics differ in their side effects. With the range of medicines now available, a suitable and acceptable antipsychotic can usually be found for everyone.



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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This leaflet is to help you understand more about you medication. It is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (see [emc.medicines.org.uk/](http://emc.medicines.org.uk/)) For more information, you could contact your local hospital pharmacy – they might have a helpline – or visit [www.nwmhp.nhs.uk/pharmacy](http://www.nwmhp.nhs.uk/pharmacy).

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