

Galantamine

(pronounced gal – ant – a – meen)

Why has galantamine prescribed?

Galantamine is a drug used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other similar conditions. It is known as an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor.

What are the benefits of taking galantamine?

In some people galantamine improves memory and other brain functions. It can also help some people feel more alert, improve mood and motivation.

Are there any precautions with galantamine?

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

- if you have epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, asthma, lung disease, a history of stomach ulcers or suffer from heart, liver, kidney or prostate trouble.
- if you are taking antipsychotics, antidepressants, anticonvulsants, anticholinergics, erythromycin, ketoconazole, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as aspirin or ibuprofen and medicines for high blood pressure. 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. St John's Wort should not be taken by patients prescribed galantamine.
- If you are allergic to lactose (you should avoid the Reminyl brand of galantamine tablets - any other brands should be suitable and it is not contained in the sustained release capsules or liquid preparations of any brands including Reminyl)

What is the usual dose of galantamine?

The starting dose is usually 4mg twice day. This may sometimes be increased after a month. The usual dose of galantamine may be between 8mg and 12mg twice daily (for the normal release tablets) or between 16mg and 24mg daily (for the sustained release capsules)

How should galantamine be taken?

Galantamine is either taken twice a day (for tablets or liquid preparation) with breakfast and evening meal or once daily (for the sustained release capsules) which can be taken at any time of day, with or just after food, as long as they are taken at the same time each day. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

What form does galantamine come in?

Galantamine is available as tablets, sustained release capsules and liquid. The tablets are available as 4mg, 8mg and 12mg. The sustained release capsules are taken once a day and are available as 8mg, 16mg and 24mg. The liquid is available as 4mg per ml.

What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. 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 galantamine is first taken?

Galantamine, like many medicines, does not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. Memory and other brain functions may slowly improve over several weeks. In some people galantamine does not improve memory but slows down the decline in brain functioning seen in Alzheimer's disease. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your pharmacist, doctor 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 pharmacist, doctor 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.

Is galantamine addictive?

Galantamine is not addictive, but if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking galantamine should not drink alcohol. This is because alcohol can cause confusion and cognitive impairment. Alcohol worsens the symptoms of dementia. In some people, *very small amounts* of alcohol may not be harmful, but it is probably best to avoid alcohol altogether. 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 galantamine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking galantamine your original symptoms are very likely to return. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will have a discussion with you and your family or carers and advise you on how long you should continue to take your tablets. You should always discuss with your prescriber any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines.

Are there any alternatives to galantamine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although acetylcholinesterase inhibitors have the same therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are four drug treatments available for Alzheimer's disease so most people can find one which suits them. Psychological and practical therapies can also help in some types of dementia, usually alongside medication.

Summary of side effects

| Side effect | Side effect |
|---|--|
| <p>Nausea - Common (sometimes with vomiting)</p> <p>What can be done about it? This usually occurs when galantamine is started or the dose is increased. This should wear off within a few days. Taking the medication with food may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.</p> |  |
| (Other less common) side effects | How common is it and what can be done about it? |
| Diarrhoea – loose stools | Uncommon These effects usually occur when galantamine is started or the dose is increased. These may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if the effects of these persist. |
| Sweating | Uncommon Discuss this with your prescriber if this persists. |
| Muscle cramps | Uncommon Tell your prescriber if you experience any muscle cramps. |
| Abdominal pain | Uncommon These effects usually occur when galantamine is started or the dose is increased. These may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if the effects of these persist. |
| Loss of appetite (and weight loss) | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. |
| Headache | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists |
| Dizziness | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. |
| Tremor | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. |
| Fainting | Uncommon Tell your prescriber if you experience any fainting spells or falls. |
| Drowsiness | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. You may need to change the time that galantamine is taken. |
| Hallucinations | Uncommon Tell your prescriber straightaway if you see or hear anything unusual or disturbing. |

Very common = almost everyone affected
Rare = few people affected

Common = many people affected
Very rare = very few or no one affected

Uncommon = some people affected

Disclaimer

This leaflet is to help you understand more about your medication. This is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (see <http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>). 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. If in doubt consult your GP or a health care professional.

This leaflet has been supplied by:

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