

Memantine

(pronounced mem – an – teen)

Why has memantine been prescribed?

Memantine is a drug used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

What are the benefits of taking memantine?

In some people memantine improves memory and other brain functions.

Are there any precautions with memantine?

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

- a) if you have epilepsy, or suffer from high blood pressure, heart, liver or kidney trouble.
- b) if you are taking medication especially for Parkinson's disease, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, anticholinergics, cimetidine, ranitidine, anticoagulants such as warfarin, or dextromethorphan (in some cough medicines). 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 have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient of memantine tablets (but not the liquid).

What is the usual dose of memantine?

The starting dose is usually 5mg each day, in the morning. This may sometimes be increased at weekly intervals. The usual dose of memantine is up to 20mg daily.

How should memantine be taken?

Memantine is usually taken once a day, in the morning, 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 memantine come in?

Memantine is available as tablets and liquid. The tablets are available as 10mg and 20mg, there is also an initiation pack which contains a week's supply each of 5mg, 10mg, 15mg and 20mg tablets. The liquid is available as 10mg per ml in a pump actuation pack (2 downward pumps is equivalent to 10mg).

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 the following day. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

What will happen when memantine is first taken?

Memantine, 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 memantine 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 memantine addictive?

Memantine 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 memantine 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 memantine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking memantine 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 memantine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although drugs for dementia have similar 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

(Other less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Constipation	Uncommon Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. Your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.
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.
Drowsiness	Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. You may need to change the time of day that memantine is taken.
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	Uncommon Tell your prescriber straightaway if you experience shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
Hypertension (high blood pressure)	Uncommon Ask your doctor or nurse to check your blood pressure.
Tiredness	Rare This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Confusion	Rare Tell your prescriber straightaway if you become in any way confused or disorientated.
Vomiting	Rare This should wear off within a few days. Taking the medication with food may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Hallucinations	Very rare Tell your prescriber straightaway if you see or hear anything unusual or disturbing. The dose of memantine may need to be reduced.
Seizures	Very rare Tell your prescriber straightaway if you experience a seizure (or fit).

Very common = almost everyone affected Common = many people affected Uncommon = some people affected
Rare = few people affected Very rare = very few or no one 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:

Medicines Information, Pharmacy Department, Maudsley Hospital, London SE5 8AZ | Telephone: 020 3228 2317

Artwork by Oscar Millar
www.millarstratton.co.uk