

Pirenzepine

(pronounced pih - renz - a - peen)

Why has pirenzepine been prescribed?

Pirenzepine used to be available in the UK to treat stomach problems. It is now used for its effects in relieving the symptoms of hypersalivation (drooling) caused by antipsychotic drugs. Pirenzepine is not licensed in the UK however this does not mean the medication is unsafe. There is a lot of experience of using pirenzepine for hypersalivation.

What are the benefits of taking pirenzepine?

It helps reduce hypersalivation and may prevent acid reflux.

Are there any precautions with pirenzepine?

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

- a) If you have glaucoma, urinary retention, gastrointestinal obstruction or suffer from heart, severe kidney or prostate trouble.
- b) If you are taking any other medication for schizophrenia, dementia, depression, Parkinson's disease or heart problems. 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.
- d) If you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient in the tablets.

What is the usual dose of pirenzepine?

The dose is usually 50mg up to three times daily. The maximum dose is 150mg (three tablets) in a day.

How should pirenzepine be taken?

Pirenzepine is usually taken two to three times a day. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine another way.

What form does pirenzepine come in?

Pirenzepine is available only as tablets. The tablets are 50mg.

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 pirenzepine is first taken?

Pirenzepine begins to work in a few hours. Full effect may not be seen for several days. Like all drugs pirenzepine produces side effects. 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 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.

Is pirenzepine addictive?

Pirenzepine is not addictive, but you should not stop taking it suddenly.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking pirenzepine should not drink alcohol. This is because both pirenzepine and alcohol can cause confusion and drowsiness. This can lead to falls and accidents. 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 have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Is it OK to stop taking pirenzepine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking pirenzepine, your original symptoms may return. Most people need to remain on pirenzepine for several months. 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 pirenzepine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although medications with a similar way of working to pirenzepine have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ slightly in the side effects they produce. There are more treatments for hypersalivation so most people can find one which suits them.

Summary of side effects

Side effect	Side effect
<p>Dry mouth - Common</p> <p>What can be done about it? This is usually a side effect but when used for hypersalivation it is the main action.</p> 	<p>Drowsiness - Common</p> <p>What can be done about it? This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.</p> 
(Other less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Blurred vision	Uncommon This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. It may be necessary to switch to another medication.
Constipation	Uncommon Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. Your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.
Urinary retention (difficulty passing water)	Rare Contact your prescriber straightaway if you have any difficulty passing water.
Confusion	Very rare Tell your prescriber if you experience any changes in your thinking ability. The dose of pirenzepine may need to be reduced.
Worsening of mental illness symptoms	Very rare Tell your prescriber if you experience any worsening of symptoms related to mental illness.
Tachycardia (palpitations)	Very rare Contact your prescriber if you experience palpitations.

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.

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