

Rivastigmine

(pronounced riv – a – stig – meen)

Why has rivastigmine prescribed?

Rivastigmine is a drug used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, Lewy Body Dementia and other similar conditions. It is known as an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor.

What are the benefits of taking rivastigmine?

In some people rivastigmine improves memory and other brain functions.

Are there any precautions with rivastigmine?

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

- a) if you have epilepsy, asthma, lung disease, a history of stomach ulcers or suffer from heart, liver, kidney or prostate trouble.
- b) if you are taking medicines with anticholinergic properties (including some antipsychotics and antidepressants). 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.

What is the usual dose of rivastigmine?

The starting dose is usually 1.5mg twice day. This may sometimes be increased after a couple of weeks. The usual dose of rivastigmine may be between 3mg and 6mg twice daily.

How should rivastigmine be taken?

Rivastigmine is usually taken twice a day, with breakfast and evening meal. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

What form does rivastigmine come in?

Rivastigmine is available as capsules, liquid and patches. The capsules are available as 1.5mg, 3 mg, 4.5mg and 6mg, the liquid is available as 2mg per ml and the patches as 4.6mg in 24 hours, 9.5mg in 24 hours and 13.3mg in 24 hours.

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 rivastigmine is first taken?

Rivastigmine, 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 rivastigmine 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 rivastigmine addictive?

Rivastigmine 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 rivastigmine 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 rivastigmine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking rivastigmine 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 rivastigmine?

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? These effects usually occur when rivastigmine is started or the dose is increased. These should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if either of these persist.</p>  | <p>Diarrhoea - Common (loose stools)</p> <p>What can be done about it? These effects usually occur when rivastigmine is started or the dose is increased. These should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if either of these persist.</p>  |
| <p>Dizziness - Common</p> <p>What can be done about it? This may 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? |
| Loss of appetite (and weight loss) | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. |
| Abdominal pain | Uncommon These effects usually occur when rivastigmine is started or the dose is increased. These should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if either of these persist. |
| Headache | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists |
| Agitation | Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists |
| Sweating | Uncommon Discuss this with your prescriber if it becomes troublesome. |
| Tremor | 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 that rivastigmine is taken. |
| Insomnia or disturbed sleep | Rare This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. You may need to change the time that rivastigmine is taken. |

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| Fainting | Rare Tell your prescriber if you experience any fainting spells or falls. |
| Hallucinations | Very Rare Tell your prescriber straightaway if you see or hear anything unusual or disturbing. |

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:

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| <p>Artwork by Oscar Millar www.millarstratton.co.uk</p> |
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