

Ziprasidone

(pronounced zee-praz-ee-dohn)

Why has ziprasidone been prescribed?

Ziprasidone is an antipsychotic used to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It is sometimes used in other conditions.

What are the benefits of taking ziprasidone?

Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis. They also shorten the time to recovery and help prevent relapses. Ziprasidone is not currently licensed in the UK but it is available and used in the US and in other European countries.

Are there any precautions with ziprasidone?

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

- a) if you suffer from liver or heart trouble
- b) if you are taking any other medication, such as antidepressants, medicines for anxiety disorders, epilepsy or Parkinson's disease. 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 the capsules have this as an ingredient.

What is the usual dose of ziprasidone?

The starting dose is 20-40mg twice a day depending on the condition it is being used to treat. This is sometimes increased slowly over a few weeks. The usual dose of ziprasidone is between 40 and 80mg twice a day. The maximum dose is 160mg in a day. It may take a few weeks to get to the dose that is most suitable.

How should ziprasidone be taken?

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

What form does ziprasidone come in?

Ziprasidone is available in capsule form. The capsules are available as 20mg, 40mg, 60mg and 80mg.

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

What will happen when ziprasidone is first taken?

Ziprasidone, like many medicines, does not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. To begin with, some people find that ziprasidone may help them feel more alert and less sedated. Later, (usually in two or three weeks) other symptoms should begin to improve. 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 for patients.

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 ziprasidone addictive?

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

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking ziprasidone 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 ziprasidone when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking ziprasidone, your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to be on ziprasidone 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 ziprasidone?

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.

Summary of side effects

(Other less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Nausea (with or without vomiting)	Uncommon This tends to wear off over time. Some people find that it helps to take the medicine with some food and in the morning. Speak to your prescriber if this side effect does not wear off within a few days
Drowsiness	Uncommon If affected, then take the medicine at night. Be careful with driving if you still feel drowsy in the morning. This often lessens with time.
Constipation	Uncommon Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. You should also drink plenty of fluids. If necessary your prescriber may prescribe a laxative
Dizziness	Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists
Headache	Uncommon This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists
Movement disorders (trembling, muscle spasms)	Uncommon Another medicine may be prescribed to treat this. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.
Agitation (feeling restless and worried)	Rare This tends to wear off over time. If it does not improve after a few days, speak to your prescriber about it.

*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