



Asenapine

(Pronounced as-sen-a-peen)

Why has asenapine been prescribed?

Asenapine is an antipsychotic drug used to treat manic episodes. These medications can be prescribed to treat mood disorders.

What are the benefits of taking asenapine?

Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the severity of the symptoms of mania. They also shorten the time to recovery and prevent mania returning.

Are there any precautions with asenapine?

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

- a) If you have Parkinson's disease, dementia, diabetes, epilepsy, glaucoma, myasthenia gravis, low blood pressure or suffer from heart or liver trouble.
- b) If you are taking any other medication especially medication for high blood pressure, irregular heart beat, Parkinson's disease, anticonvulsants or 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. St John's Wort should not be taken by patients prescribed asenapine.
- c) If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

What is the usual dose of asenapine?

The starting dose is usually 5mg or 10mg twice daily with one dose taken in the morning and the second in the evening. The usual dose of asenapine may be between 5mg and 10mg daily reducing to 5mg twice daily according to response. If you are taking asenapine along with other medications for mood a dose of 5mg twice daily is generally used. It may take some time to get to the dose that is most suitable.

How should asenapine be taken?

Asenapine should be placed under the tongue until completely dissolved, this should take a few seconds. The tablet should not be swallowed or chewed and eating and drinking anything should be avoided for 10 minutes after the tablet is taken. It is usually taken twice daily. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

What form does asenapine come in?

Asenapine is available as 5mg and 10mg tablets.

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 asenapine is first taken?

Asenapine, 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 asenapine may help them feel more calm and relaxed. Later, (after a few days or more) other symptoms should begin to improve. Unfortunately, some people get side effects before starting to feel better. However, most side effects will lessen and should go away after a few weeks. The table below lists some of the side effects associated with asenapine. 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 0808 100 3352 or go to www.mhra.gov.uk.

Is asenapine addictive?

Asenapine 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 asenapine 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 mania, depression and anxiety 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 have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

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

No. If you stop taking asenapine, your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to remain on asenapine for quite a long time, sometimes years. 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 asenapine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although antipsychotics have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are several

antipsychotics available so most people can find one which suits them. Another group of medicines called mood stabilisers are also used in the treatment of bipolar disorder which maybe used instead of or in addition to antipsychotics. Psychological therapies can also help in bipolar disorder usually in addition to medication.

Summary of side effects



Drowsiness - Common

What can be done about it?

These effects usually occur when asenapine is first started or when the dose is increased. Discuss with your prescriber if any persist. It may be necessary to alter the dose or preparation of asenapine.



Anxiety - Common

What can be done about it?

These effects usually occur when asenapine is first started or when the dose is increased. Discuss with your prescriber if any persist. It may be necessary to alter the dose or preparation of asenapine.

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Increased appetite and weight gain	Uncommon Asenapine makes people feel hungry and eat more. Try to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise.
Low blood pressure	Uncommon This can be troublesome when standing up. You may feel dizzy or faint. This tends to wear off in time. Tell your prescriber if it doesn't.
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.
Abnormal taste	Uncommon

	This may occur directly after taking the tablets but should wear off within one hour.
Numbness in the tongue or mouth	Uncommon This may occur directly after taking the tablets but should wear off within one hour.
Sexual dysfunction - reduced libido (desire) and lack of orgasm in males and females. Impotence in males	Rare Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. It may be necessary to switch to another medication. Symptoms should go away when switched to another medication
Menstrual changes (women) – periods may stop	Rare Any changes should be reported to the prescriber. Treatment may be switched to another medicine which does not cause this side effect.
Abnormal movements (also known as tardive dyskinesia)	Rare This occurs only after long term treatment. It usually begins with unusual movements of the mouth and tongue. Symptoms may go away when switched to another medicine.

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 does not replace the official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information, visit www.slam.nhs.uk/meds or speak to a health care professional.

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