



Mirtazapine

(Pronounced mur-taz-a-peen)

Why has mirtazapine been prescribed?

Mirtazapine is an antidepressant. This medication is prescribed to treat depression and other mood disorders such as anxiety.

What are the benefits of taking mirtazapine?

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

Are there any precautions with mirtazapine?

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

- If you have epilepsy, diabetes, glaucoma or suffer from low blood pressure, heart, liver, kidney or prostate trouble.
- If you are taking any other medication, especially medication for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, medication for anxiety or insomnia, antidepressants, anticonvulsants, cimetidine, rifampicin or anticoagulants such as warfarin. 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 mirtazapine.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.
- If you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient of mirtazapine tablets (but not the dispersible tablets or liquid).

What is the usual dose of mirtazapine?

The starting dose is usually 15mg to 30mg a day. This may sometimes be increased after a few days or weeks. The usual dose of mirtazapine is between 15mg and 45mg.

How should mirtazapine be taken?

Mirtazapine is usually taken once a day, at night. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

What form does mirtazapine come in?

Mirtazapine is available as tablets, dispersible tablets and liquid. The tablets are available as 15mg, 30mg and 45mg and dispersible tablets as 15mg, 30mg and 45mg. The liquid is available as 15mg per ml.

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

What will happen when mirtazapine is first taken?

Mirtazapine, 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 mirtazapine may help them feel more calm and relaxed. Later, (usually in two to

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.

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 mirtazapine addictive?

Mirtazapine is not addictive, but if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings. Symptoms include agitation, anxiety, insomnia and dizziness.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking mirtazapine should not drink alcohol. This is because both antidepressants 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 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 may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

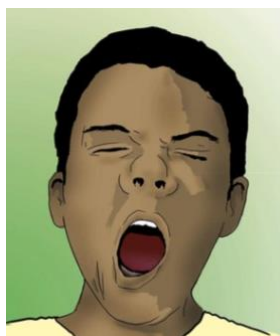
Is it OK to stop taking mirtazapine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking mirtazapine your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to remain on mirtazapine for at least six months after they have fully recovered. 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 mirtazapine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although antidepressants have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are more than 20 antidepressants available so most people can find one which suits them. Psychological therapies can also help in some types of depression, either as an alternative to medication or alongside it.

Summary of side effects



Drowsiness - Common

What can be done about it?

This usually wears off in a few weeks. Higher doses of mirtazapine are less sedative.



Increased appetite and weight gain - Common

What can be done about it?

Mirtazapine makes people feel hungry and eat more. Most people put on only a few pounds. Try to eat healthily and take exercise.



Dry mouth – Common

What can be done about it?

This should wear off within a few days. Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits may help. Report to your prescriber if this persists.

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Headache	Uncommon This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Odema (swelling of ankles)	Uncommon This may persist. Tell your prescriber as another medicine may need to be prescribed.
Dizziness	Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Postural Hypotension (low blood pressure)	Rare Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy do not drive. This dizziness is not dangerous.
Agitation	Rare This should wear off in a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Rash	Rare Stop taking mirtazapine. Contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for advice.
Blood dyscrasias (low white blood cells)	Rare Any sore throat or fever should be reported to your prescriber immediately.

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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