



Quetiapine

(Pronounced kwet-eye-a-peen)

Why has quetiapine been prescribed?

Quetiapine is an antipsychotic used to treat schizophrenia and other similar conditions.

What are the benefits of taking quetiapine?

Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis. They also shorten the time to recovery and help prevent relapses.

Are there any precautions with quetiapine?

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

- If you suffer from heart, liver, diabetes or kidney trouble.
- If you are taking any other medication, especially anticonvulsants, antibiotics, HIV medications or antifungal medicines. 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.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.
- If you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient of quetiapine tablets.
- It is recommended that grapefruit juice is not taken while taking quetiapine because grapefruit can cause increased levels of the quetiapine in the system.

What is the usual dose of quetiapine?

The starting dose is usually 50mg a day. This is increased over a few days. The usual dose of quetiapine is between 300mg and 600mg. Some people may receive higher doses. It may take a few weeks to get to the dose that is most suitable.

How should quetiapine be taken?

Quetiapine is usually taken twice a day. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine in some other way.

What form does quetiapine come in?

Quetiapine is available only in tablet form, as film coated tablets and slow release tablets. The film coated tablets are available as 25mg, 100mg, 150mg, 200mg and 300mg and extended release tablets as 50mg, 150mg, 200mg, 300mg and 400mg.

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 quetiapine is first taken?

Quetiapine, 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 quetiapine makes them feel more relaxed and calm. 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.

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 quetiapine addictive?

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

What about alcohol?

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

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

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.

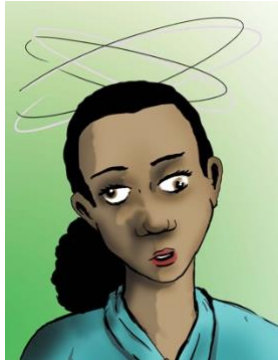
Summary of side effects



Low blood pressure - Common

What can be done about it?

This can be troublesome when standing up. You may feel dizzy or faint. This tends to wear off in time.



Dizziness – Common

What can be done about it?

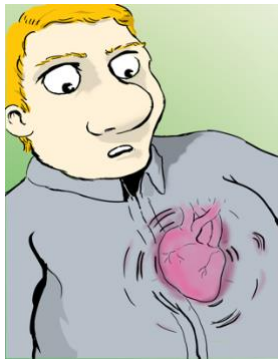
This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists



Drowsiness - Common

What can be done about it?

Drowsiness tends to wear off over time. Speak to your prescriber about changing the dose or dose timings.



Tachycardia – Common (palpitations)

What can be done about it?

Some people have a fast heart beat. This is most common in the first few weeks of treatment. If you experience a fast heart beat contact your prescriber.



Dry mouth - Common

What can be done about it?

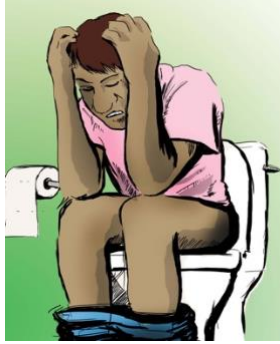
This tends to wear off. Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits may help. If this persists report it to your prescriber.



Weight gain – Common

What can be done about it?

This is usually limited to a few pounds. Try to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise.



Constipation - Common

What can be done about it?

Eat lots of fibre - fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. If necessary your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Abnormal movements (also known as tardive dyskinesia)	Very 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.
Diabetes	Very rare It may be necessary to switch to another medicine. 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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