

Olanzapine (pronounced o-lanz-a-pean)



What is olanzapine?

Olanzapine (also known as Zyprexa®) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis, schizophrenia and mania, and to prevent these symptoms coming back. It is sometimes also used to help the symptoms of anxiety and depression. It is made as plain tablets, a melt-in-the-mouth tablet, short-acting injection and a long-acting injection.

What does olanzapine help?

Olanzapine can help many symptoms. These can include psychosis (losing touch with reality) which can include hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there) and delusions (thinking something is true when it isn't). Olanzapine can also help mania (being high) or depression (being low).

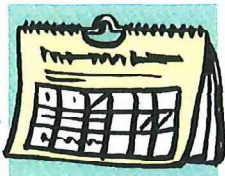


How and when should I take olanzapine?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat. For the melt-in-the-mouth tablets, just put them on your tongue and they will dissolve quickly. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking olanzapine with or after food. If the label says to take it once a day this is usually best at bedtime as it may make you drowsy at first.

How long will I have to wait before it works?

This will depend on what you are taking it for but the effect usually starts in a week or so, and builds over several weeks.

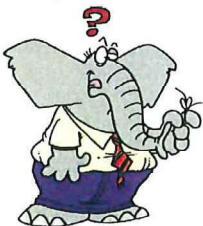


How long will I need to keep taking olanzapine for?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. It may be for several months or years.

Can I stop taking olanzapine suddenly?

It is better not to do this without talking it over first with other people e.g. relatives or your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Things normally work out much better if you stop medication in a planned way. Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after olanzapine has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw olanzapine by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks.



What should I do if I forget to take a dose of olanzapine?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 12 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects.

Can I cycle or drive while I am taking olanzapine?

You may feel a bit sleepy at first when taking olanzapine. Until this wears off, or you know how olanzapine affects you, be careful cycling and, if you have a license, do not drive or operate machinery.



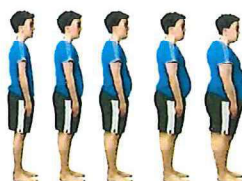
What sort of side-effects might I get with olanzapine?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from olanzapine, and what you can do about them. The more common ones are near the top of the list.



Sleepiness

Feeling sleepy or sluggish. This can last for a few hours or longer after taking a dose. Don't drive, cycle or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take olanzapine at a different time of day. It should wear off after a while. If not, ask your doctor or nurse.



Weight gain

Feeling more hungry. Eating more and putting on weight. A diet full of vegetables and fibre may help prevent weight gain.



Dry mouth

You may have not much saliva or spit. Suck sugar-free gum or boiled sweets. If it is bad, your doctor may be able to give you a mouth spray.



Feeling dizzy, light-headed or faint, especially when you stand up

Do not stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Do not cycle or drive.



Tiredness

You feel tired all the time and don't feel like doing anything. This should wear off but if not, ask your doctor next time you meet.



Peripheral oedema

This is where your ankles swell up a bit. If this happens, talk to your doctor about this the next time you meet.



Constipation

When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereals or fruit and drink enough fluid. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.



Movement disorders (extra-pyramidal side effects)

Having shaky hands or stiff muscles. It is not but is a well known side effect. If it is distressing or worries you, tell your doctor next time you meet.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.

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