

Trazodone

Trazodone (desyrel) is an antidepressant that in low doses (25-150mg) is commonly prescribed for sleep. As a sleep aid, it is not addictive but has a risk of wearing off with time or of causing daytime drowsiness.

As an antidepressant, trazodone can be very effective for both depression and anxiety, particularly in doses of 300-600mg. It was recently available in a controlled-release form (Oleptro, brand only, now discontinued) which was designed to improve the otherwise intolerable drowsiness it can cause in those doses.

Other non-FDA approved uses for trazodone in the lower dose range include:

- Treatment of akathisia, an uncomfortable restless feeling that can be caused by antipsychotic medication.
- Aggression and agitation in Alzheimer's disease

How should I take it?

Trazodone should be taken before bed; you should get into bed after taking trazodone to avoid a risk of falling. It can be taken with or without food. It can be taken as needed for sleep, or should be taken every night if using as an antidepressant.

What happens if I stop it?

Trazodone is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms.

Side effects

Common side effects with trazodone are sedation, drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth, headaches, nausea, indigestion, and visual disturbance. Nausea and indigestion are more

frequent at higher dosages and on an empty stomach. Taking trazodone with food may decrease gastrointestinal side effects. People may experience visual disturbances—seeing visual trails or afterimages when their eyes move. Generally, these side effects subside over time and are less frequent with lower dosages.

As you are starting the medicine, use caution when driving or performing tasks that require alertness. This should not be a problem once you have adjusted to the medicine and know how it affects you.

Low blood pressure: trazodone can cause blood pressure to drop when you stand up (leading to dizziness or falls). You can reduce this risk by standing up slowly.

Heart: Trazodone carries risks for people with preexisting heart problems (it can increase the QTc interval and very rarely leads to cardiac arrhythmias).

Priapism: in males, an uncontrollable, sustained, painful erection of the penis is possible though very rare with trazodone (1 per 6,000 patients). If this occurs you should go promptly to the emergency room to seek treatment.

Pregnancy: Trazodone has not been tested in women to determine its safety in pregnancy (it will not affect future pregnancies after you stop taking it and will not affect fertility in men). Trazodone does pass through breast milk.

Interactions

Recreational drugs: Alcohol can increase the dizziness and drowsiness of trazodone. Excessive use of alcohol and recreational drugs can also prevent trazodone from working.

Other medications: These web sites help you check for drug interactions. You should talk

with us about the information you find as many drug interactions have only a mild effect:

www.webmd.com/interaction-checker
reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker

How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag with a little water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds or kitty litter) and throw in the trash.

Quick facts

Brand name	Desyrel, Oleptro (controlled release, no longer available)
Dose range	25-600mg/day
Sizes	Tabs: 50, 100, 150, 300mg CR Oleptro: Discontinued
Release date	12/24/1981
FDA-approval	Depression

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 2/15/2014