

# Ziprasidone

Ziprasidone (geodon) can help bipolar mania and mixed states and can make antidepressants work better. These conditions cause irritability, agitation, anxiety, insomnia, racing thoughts, distraction and impulsivity. Ziprasidone is also used for paranoia and hallucinations.

It belongs to a class of medications called the atypical antipsychotics, which differ widely in their side effects and benefits. Among these medications, ziprasidone has the lowest risk of weight gain and diabetes.

Ziprasidone can take up to 2-3 weeks to work fully but can bring benefits after a few days.

## How should I take it?

Ziprasidone needs to be taken with food (at least 500 cal, within an hour of eating) or it is not absorbed well (only 50% is absorbed if taken without food). It can be taken all at once or divided twice per day (either method will work; you should choose which is most convenient or best tolerated for you).

Ziprasidone's benefits build up gradually in the brain and are not impacted by the time of day you take it. If it makes you feel groggy you should take it at night.

It's a good idea to link the time you take ziprasidone with a daily routine that you already have in place. Think of things you never go a day without, such as brushing your teeth, showering or a morning cup of coffee. Store your medication close to that routine and take it at the same time so you can build on habits you've already developed.

## What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your

regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

## How long do I need to take it?

This depends on your diagnosis and which other medications you are taking. Most people with bipolar disorder need to stay on at least one mood stabilizer for the long term in order to prevent mood swings. If ziprasidone helped, it is best to stay on it for at least 6 months before considering going off it. That gives the brain time to build up habits of stability.

## Key Points

1. Ziprasidone should be taken with food (at least 500 cal) otherwise it is not absorbed well.
2. Ziprasidone is similar to other medications which have caused rare but serious side effects (see list).

## What happens if I stop it?

Ziprasidone is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms. If you plan to come off ziprasidone, it is best to do so slowly (over at least 2 weeks) as that will lower the chance of sudden mood swings returning.

## Side effects

Ziprasidone is generally well tolerated and is not associated with weight gain. The most common side effects are tiredness and stomach discomfort.

If you don't tolerate the medication, try taking half the dose until the side effects get better and then raising it up.

*These side effects tend to improve with time or by lowering the dose:*

Nausea, tiredness, restlessness, muscle aches or stiffness, racing heart, dizziness.

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.

### **Rare side effects**

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

*Elevations of prolactin hormone:* this can cause menstrual irregularities and breast milk secretion. We may need to stop ziprasidone or use treatments to lower prolactin if this occurs.

### **Rare but serious side effects**

*Heart:* Ziprasidone can increase the risk of cardiac arrhythmias; this is particularly relevant to people with heart disease.

*Metabolic Changes:* Ziprasidone does not appear to increase the risk of diabetes or high cholesterol but is similar to other medications which have that risk.

*Tardive Dyskinesia:* Extremely rarely, ziprasidone may cause involuntary movements, such as twitching in the face, hands or other muscles. This risk may be greater if you take ziprasidone for many years or have taken older antipsychotics in the past. This condition can be treated but sometimes it is not reversible.

*Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome:* This syndrome, which is extremely rare on ziprasidone, consists of sudden, severe muscle stiffness, fever and irregular pulse and blood pressure.

*Severe Rash:* There have been rare cases of severe rash called DRESS syndrome; if you have a fever with a rash and/or swollen lymph

glands after starting ziprasidone stop the medicine and call us.

*Risks in Dementia:* Ziprasidone can increase the risk of death when used in older adults with dementia. This effect is not seen in people without dementia and may be related to brain-changes that dementia brings.

*Pregnancy:* Ziprasidone has not been adequately studied in pregnancy. It does pass through breast milk.

### **Interactions**

*Recreational drugs:* Alcohol (in excess of 2 glasses/day) and recreational drugs can prevent ziprasidone from working.

*Other medications:* This web site helps you check for drug interactions. You should talk with us about the information you find as many drug interactions have only a mild effect:

[reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker](http://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 water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds) and throw in the garbage.

### **Cost and insurance coverage**

Ziprasidone is available in generic form. If you are paying out of pocket, the lowest cost is usually found at Costco (336-970-2300; you do not need to be a member to use their pharmacy).

### Quick facts

Brand	Geodon
Dose range	40-200 mg/day
Sizes	Caps: 20, 40, 60, 80mg
Release date	2/5/2001
FDA-approval	Bipolar mania and mixed states, schizophrenia

## Comparison of Atypical Antipsychotics

Medication	Unipolar Depression	Bipolar Depression	Mania & Mixed States	Schizophrenia	Irritability due to Autism	OCD	Borderline Personality	Tourette's (muscle tics)	Generic?	Weight Gain	Tiredness
Risperidone (risperdal)	◇		■	■	■	□	□	□	Y	↑	↑
Olanzapine (zyprexa, symbyax)	◆	◆	■	■		□	□	□	Y	↑↑↑	↑↑
Quetiapine (seroquel)	◆	■	■	■		□	□		Y	↑↑	↑↑↑
Ziprasidone (geodon)	◇		■	■				□	Y	—	↑↑
Aripiprazole (abilify)	◆		■	■	■	□	□	□	N	↑	—
Paliperidone (invega)				■		□			N	↑	—
Asenapine (saphris)			■	■					N	↑	↑↑
Lurasidone (latuda)		■	□	■					N	↑	↑
lloperidone (fanapt)				■					N	↑↑	↑

■ = FDA-approved    ◆ = FDA-approved in combination with an antidepressant    □ = Effective but not FDA-approved  
 Side effects: ↑↑↑ major, ↑↑ moderate, ↑ mild, — rare or none

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/3/2015