

# Cariprazine

Cariprazine (Vraylar) can help depression, anxiety, agitation, paranoia, and hallucinations. It belongs to a class of medications called the atypical antipsychotics, which differ widely in their side effects and benefits. These medications can be difficult to tolerate, but cariprazine is one of the better tolerated in the group.

Cariprazine treats bipolar mania and mixed states, which cause irritability, agitation, anxiety, insomnia, racing thoughts, distraction and impulsivity.

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

## How should I take it?

Cariprazine can be taken once a day with or without food. Cariprazine's benefits build up gradually in the brain and are not impacted by the time of day you take it. Most people prefer to take it at night as it can cause drowsiness.

Link the time you take cariprazine with a daily routine that you already have in place, such as showering or brushing your teeth. Store the medicine near 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 cariprazine 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.

## What happens if I stop it?

### Key Points

1. Cariprazine can be taken morning or night (take at night if it causes drowsiness)
2. The most common side effect is restlessness, which is treatable or can be managed by lowering the dose.
3. There are several rare, but serious, side effects with cariprazine (diabetes, high cholesterol, tardive dyskinesia).
4. Check for coupons at [www.vraylar.com](http://www.vraylar.com)

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

## Checking labs

It is a good idea to check for diabetes and high cholesterol while taking cariprazine. This medication, as well as bipolar disorder itself, increases the risk of these conditions.

## Side effects

The most common side effects were restlessness, muscle stiffness, tremor, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, headache, constipation and stomach upset.

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

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

Tiredness, restlessness, muscle aches or stiffness.

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:* cariprazine 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 is very rare and can cause menstrual irregularities and breast milk secretion. We may need to stop cariprazine or use treatments to lower prolactin if this occurs.

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

*Metabolic Changes:* Cariprazine can increase the risk of diabetes and high cholesterol. This risk is much lower with cariprazine than with other atypical antipsychotics.

*Tardive Dyskinesia:* Extremely rarely, cariprazine may cause involuntary movements, such as twitching in the face, hands or other muscles. This risk may be greater if you take cariprazine 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 cariprazine, consists of sudden, severe muscle stiffness, fever and irregular pulse and blood pressure.

*Use in Dementia:* Medications similar to cariprazine 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:* Cariprazine has not been adequately studied in pregnancy. It does pass through breast milk.

## **Akathisia**

This side effect is a feeling of inner restlessness which makes it very uncomfortable to sit still. It is not dangerous and may improve with time or a lower dose.

Akathisia can be relieved with several medications including propranolol, vitamin B6, betaxolol, pramipexole, gabapentin, trazodone, and mirtazapine.

## **Interactions**

*Recreational drugs:* Alcohol (in excess of 2 glasses/day) and recreational drugs can prevent cariprazine 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:

[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**

Cariprazine only available in brand form. There may be coupons at [www.vyralar.com](http://www.vyralar.com). If your insurance requires prior authorization for the medication please contact us at:

[auth@moodtreatmentcenter.com](mailto:auth@moodtreatmentcenter.com)

**Quick facts**

Brand	Vraylar
Dose range	1.5-6mg/day (has been used up to 12mg/day)
Sizes	> Caps: 1.5, 3, 4.5, 6mg

Release date	9/17/2015
FDA-approval	Bipolar mania and mixed states, schizophrenia

## Comparison of Atypical Antipsychotics

		Unipolar Depression	Bipolar Depression	Mania & Mixed States	Schizophrenia	Irritability in Autism	OCD	Borderline Personality	Weight Gain	Tiredness	Restlessness
Generic	Asenapine (Saphris)		□	■	■				↑	↑↑	↑
	Aripiprazole (Abilify)	◆		■	■	■	□	□	↑	↑↑	↑↑
	Olanzapine (Zyprexa, Symbyax)	◆	◆	■	■		□	□	↑↑↑	↑↑	↑↑
	Paliperidone (Invega)				■		□		↑	↑	↑
	Risperidone (Risperdal)	◇		■	■	■	□	□	↑	↑↑	↑↑↑
	Quetiapine (Seroquel)	◆	■	■	■		□	□	↑↑	↑↑↑	—
	Ziprasidone (Geodon)	◇		■	■				—	↑↑	—
Brand Only	Brexipiprazole (Rexulti)	◆			■				↑	↑	—
	Cariprazine (Vraylar)	◇	■	■	■				↑	↑	↑↑↑
	Iloperidone (Fanapt)				■				↑↑	↑	—
	Lumateperone (Caplyta)		■		■				—	↑↑	—
	Lurasidone (Latuda)		■	□	■				↑	↑↑	↑↑
	Pimavanserin (Nuplazid)	◇				□			—	↑	—
<p>           ■ FDA-approved    ◆ Approved when used with an antidepressant    □ Works but not approved  <i>Side effects</i>    ↑↑↑ major    ↑↑ moderate    ↑ mild    — rare         </p>											

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 4/22/2022