

# Amantadine (Symmetrel)

Amantadine was originally developed to treat the flu virus and improve muscle stiffness in parkinson's disease. It has since been found to treat fatigue in multiple sclerosis and improve weight loss in people taking psychiatric medications.

People who took amantadine lost an average of 3-9 pounds more than those taking a sugar pill after 3 months of treatment. Amantadine should be used as part of a weight-loss program, including moderate exercise and a reduced-calorie diet. Ask your doctor about weight-loss ideas that would be right for you.

Amantadine has not been well-researched in psychiatric conditions. Small studies suggest it may be beneficial in depression, ADHD, sexual dysfunction, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder in children, autism, and traumatic brain injury. It is known to enhance dopamine (which is involved in depression and cognition) and modulate glutamate (which is involved in mood disorders) in the brain.

## How To Take It

- Amantadine can be taken with or without food, morning or night.
- If you miss a dose... ask yourself if you are closer to the dose you missed – if so, take the missed dose and continue on your regular schedule. If you are closer to the next scheduled dose, wait and take that one. Do not double-up on doses.

## Warnings

If you have diabetes and lose weight on amantadine, your doctor may need to adjust your diabetic medications.

## Side Effects & Warnings

*Common:* Dizzy, uncoordinated, trouble concentrating (caution when operating a vehicle). Headache, nausea, nightmares, insomnia. Purplish spots on legs (these go away when the medicine is stopped).

*Psychiatric:* mood may improve or worsen with amantadine; it may cause hallucinations.

## Warnings

Let your doctor know if you have glaucoma, heart failure, liver or kidney disease, or take potassium. Amantadine may increase the risk of low blood pressure, seizures, and edema.

## Interactions

Amantadine can be taken with these medicines, but may increase their side effects: Betel Nut, Bromperidol, Bupropion (Wellbutrin), Triamterene. There may be other drug interactions; check with your pharmacist and let your doctors know you are taking amantadine.

—Chris Aiken, M.D., updated 3/15/18