

# Mirtazapine

Mirtazapine (Remeron) is an antidepressant. Research has also identified a wide array of other benefits for mirtazapine including:

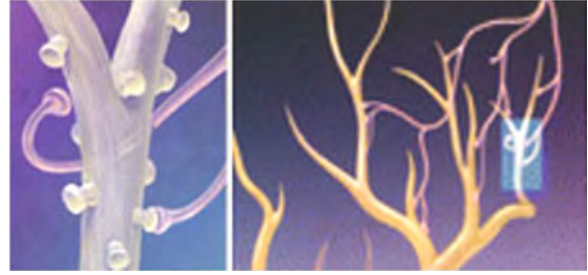
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Amphetamine abuse
- Itch, sweating, tension headaches

Mirtazapine is unique among antidepressants in that it often works when other options have not. Many antidepressants have not been found to work in people older than 60, but mirtazapine has. It can also be added to other antidepressants to make them work better.

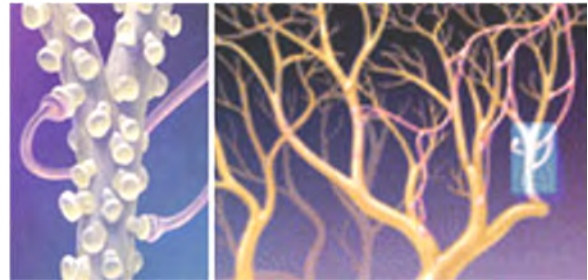
## How it works

Mirtazapine enhances both norepinephrine and serotonin, two neurotransmitters involved in anxiety and depression. However, this medication impacts serotonin in opposite ways to the traditional serotonin antidepressants (SSRIs). Mirtazapine impacts histamine receptors, which cause sedation.

Mirtazapine also helps brain cells to grow and strengthen, in ways similar to the effects of aerobic exercise:



*Before treatment:* the effects of depression and stress have caused this nerve cell to shrink back like a tree with few branches.



*After treatment:* Antidepressant treatment has strengthened the roots and connections of the brain cell. The result is better communication within the brain and better stress management.

## How should I take it?

Mirtazapine should be taken at night, with or without food. It is best to go to bed after taking it.

## 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?

In general, the medicine should be taken at least 6-12 months after the symptoms resolve in order to prevent the problem from returning. That gives the brain time to build up habits of stability. Some people may need to take the medication longer to prevent the return of

depression, especially if they have had 3 or more episodes of depression in their life.

### What happens if I stop it?

Mirtazapine is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms.

### Side effects

Drowsiness, dry mouth. Weight gain occurs in 20-30% of people, and may lead to high cholesterol levels.

Paradoxically, the drowsiness improves with higher doses (beyond 15mg) of mirtazapine.

Mirtazapine does not cause sexual side effects and rarely causes stomach distress. In fact, it can relieve these side effects when added to serotonin antidepressants.

Extremely rarely, mirtazapine has been associated with low white blood count (these blood cells are necessary for fighting infection).

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.

*Pregnancy:* Mirtazapine has not been adequately evaluated during pregnancy. It is secreted in breast milk.

### Overdose

Mirtazapine is relatively safe in overdose.

### Interactions

Mirtazapine has few significant interactions. cimetidine and fluvoxamine can increase its blood-levels, and carbamazepine can decrease mirtazapine levels. The web sites below 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](http://www.webmd.com/interaction-checker)  
[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 a little water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds or kitty litter) and throw in the trash.

### Cost and insurance coverage

Mirtazapine 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

Brands	Remeron
Dose range	15-45mg/day
Sizes	Tabs: 7.5, 15, 30, 45mg Dissolvable tabs: 15, 30, 45mg
Release date	6/14/1996
FDA-approval	Depression

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 2/15/2014