Memory Assessment Service
Brighton & Hove

Information for people taking Memantine

(say: mem-anne-teen)

What is memantine used for?

- Memantine (also called Ebixa® and others) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of moderate to severe Alzheimer's Disease (dementia)
- It is made as tablets and an oral solution (liquid).

What is the usual dose of memantine?

- The starting dose of memantine is 5mg each day.
- This is increased slowly to the usual standard dose of 20mg each day, although some people only need 10mg a day.

How should I take memantine?

- Swallow the tablets with water

When should I take memantine?

- Memantine is usually taken once a day
- It can be taken any time of the day, but this should be at the same time of each day

How long will memantine take to work?

- Memantine should start to work in a couple of weeks or so.

How long will I need to keep taking memantine?

- Possibly for the rest of your life.

Is memantine addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?

- Memantine is not addictive
- You can stop taking memantine suddenly
- There are no known problems. However, the symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early
- Discuss this with your prescriber, doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of memantine at the right time?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 10 hours of your next dose.
- If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal.

Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking memantine?

- Some people may need blood tests while they are taking memantine and occasionally you may be asked for an up-to-date weight measurement.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking memantine?

- You may feel a bit sleepy at first so be careful as it may slow down your reaction times
- Until this wears off, or you know how it affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking memantine?

- If you drink alcohol while taking memantine it may make you feel a little more sleepy.

Will memantine affect my other medication?

Memantine has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- Memantine should not usually be taken with amantadine or ketamine, and care is needed if taken with baclofen or dantrolene
- Memantine can sometimes decrease the effect of some antipsychotics or phenobarbital
- Memantine can increase the effect of levodopa (e.g. Sinemet®, Madopar®) for Parkinson's Disease.

What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking memantine?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on.

You must also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks.

If you have a side effect from our experience the most common would be increased sleepiness. This this does not improve with time or is interfering with quality of life your dose may need to be amended.

If you have side effects or concerns regarding memantine you should contact your pharmacist or GP for advice. None of the clinicians in MAS work for the service every day so we are unable to respond to medication queries in a timely fashion.

COMMON (fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)	
Somnolence You feel very sleepy or sluggish.	Discuss with your GP. It may be possible to adjust the dose.
Dizziness Feeling light-headed and faint.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie or sit down if you feel it coming on. A change in dose may help. Discuss this with your GP.
Constipation Feeling "bunged up" inside. You can't pass a bowel motion.	Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid, keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your GP or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
Headache When your head is painful and pounding.	Ask your pharmacist if it is safe to take paracetamol with any other medicines you are taking.
Shortness of breath Finding it difficult to breathe, and your chest feels tight.	This may happen if you have asthma or other respiratory conditions. Contact your GP now.

UNCOMMON (fewer than about 1 in 100 people might get these)	
Hallucinations Seeing or hearing things that are not there	Tell your GP. It may be possible to alter the dose or change your medications.
Vomiting Feeling sick and being sick.	If it is bad, contact your GP. It may be possible to adjust the dose
Abnormal gait Being wobbly, unsteady or leaning one way	Tell your GP . It may be possible to alter the dose or change your medication.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You must also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. The 'Handy charts' will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions.

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