

Benzhexol (pron. Ben's-hecks-ol)

What is benzhexol used for?

Benzhexol (sometimes known by its trade name Artane[®] or its other name trihexyphenidyl) is usually used to help treat the tremor, stiffness and shaking (called extra-pyramidal or Parkinsonian side effects), which are side effects of some of the antipsychotics. It is known as an anticholinergic or antimuscarinic. It is available as tablets.

What is the usual dose of benzhexol?

The usual dose of benzhexol is around 2-5mg two or three times a day.

How should I take benzhexol?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat. For the liquid, use a medicine spoon, dropper or oral syringe. Use it carefully to make sure you measure the correct amount.

When should I take benzhexol?

Take your benzhexol as directed on the medicine label. Try to take it at regular times each day. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking benzhexol with or after food. If the instructions say to take it once a day this is usually best in the morning as it may keep you awake.

What are the alternatives to benzhexol?

There are some other medicine treatments for these side effects (e.g. orphenadrine, procyclidine) as well as trying a different antipsychotic. See our website and "Handy chart" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will benzhexol take to work?

Benzhexol usually takes a few hours to start working, although it can take a few days to reach full effect.

How long will I need to keep taking benzhexol for?

You may only need to take benzhexol for a week or two after starting your antipsychotic as most of the muscle stiffness wears off. Some people do need to take it for longer than that. Talk to your doctor about this.

Is benzhexol addictive?

Benzhexol is not addictive as such, although some people have abused them.

Can I stop taking benzhexol suddenly?

Benzhexol is usually best taken only when you need it. If you need to take it every day, it is not a good idea to stop it suddenly as the side effects can quickly return. When the time comes, you should stop benzhexol by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of benzhexol?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 4-6 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects. If you need to take it every day and you have problems remembering your doses (as very many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs, boxes and devices that can be used to help you remember.

Will benzhexol affect my other medication?

Benzhexol has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- The effects of benzhexol can sometimes be increased by SSRIs (e.g. citalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline), some older antipsychotics, tricyclics (e.g. dothiepin/dosulepin, imipramine) or memantine
- Benzhexol can reduce the effects of anticholinesterases (e.g. donepezil, rivastigmine and galantamine)
- Benzhexol can slightly sometimes decrease the effect of cimetidine

- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and benzhexol.
- Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking benzhexol?

If you drink alcohol while taking benzhexol it may make you feel more sleepy. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking benzhexol?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from benzhexol.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (less than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus properly.	Don't drive. See your doctor if you are worried.
Dry mouth	Not enough saliva or spit.	Suck boiled sweets or wine gums (but be careful if you are putting on weight). If it is still bad, your doctor may be able to give you a mouth spray.
Constipation	When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). You can't pass a motion.	Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid. Make sure you keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
RARE (less than about 1 in 100 people might get these)		
Stomach upset	This includes feeling sick and getting diarrhoea (the runs).	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting the drug, tell your doctor. Taking it with food may help.
Urine retention	Not much urine passed.	Contact your doctor now.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint.	Your dose may be too high, contact your doctor. Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming. Don't drive.
Confusion	Your mind is all mixed up.	Your dose may be too high, contact your doctor.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

Will I need a blood test if I am taking benzhexol?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking benzhexol.

Can I drive while I am taking benzhexol?

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

Prepared for you by Choice and Medication

This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. It is not a manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet. You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.