

## **Benzatropine** (pron. Ben's-a-tro-peen)

### **What is benzatropine used for?**

Benzatropine (also known by its trade name Cogentin<sup>®</sup>) 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 and an injection.

### **What is the usual dose of benzatropine?**

The usual dose of benzatropine is around 1-2mg once or twice a day.

### **How should I take benzatropine?**

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.

### **When should I take benzatropine?**

Take your benzatropine 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 benzatropine with or after food. If the label says to take it once a day this is usually best in the morning as it may keep you awake.

### **What are the alternatives to benzatropine?**

There are some other medicine treatments for these side effects (e.g. benzhexol) as well as trying a different antipsychotic.

### **How long will benzatropine take to work?**

Benzatropine 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 benzatropine for?**

You may only need to take benzatropine 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 benzatropine addictive?**

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

### **Can I stop taking benzatropine suddenly?**

Benzatropine 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 orphenadrine 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 benzatropine?**

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 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 benzatropine affect my other medication?**

Benzatropine has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- The effects of benzatropine can sometimes be increased by SSRIs (e.g. citalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline), some older antipsychotics, tricyclics (e.g. dothiepin/dosulepin, imipramine) or memantine
- Benzatropine can reduce the effects of anticholinesterases (e.g. donepezil, rivastigmine and galantamine)
- Benzatropine can slightly sometimes decrease the effect of cimetidine
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and benzatropine.

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 benztropine?

If you drink alcohol while taking benztropine 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 benztropine?

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

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
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.
<b>RARE</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i> )		
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 lightheaded 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 benztropine?

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

## Can I drive while I am taking benztropine?

You may feel a bit sleepy at first when taking benztropine. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how benztropine 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.