

Flupentixol (pron. flew-pen-ticks-ol)

What is flupentixol used for?

Flupentixol (which used to be called flupenthixol and is also sometimes known by its trade name Fluanxol[®]) is usually used in lower dose to help treat the symptoms of depression and anxiety. In higher dose it can also be used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis. It is available as tablets, and also a long-acting injection.

What is the usual dose of flupentixol?

The usual dose of flupentixol for depression and anxiety is around 1-2mg a day (up to 3mg a day).

How should I take flupentixol?

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 flupentixol?

Take your flupentixol as directed on the medicine label. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier to remember as there is no problem about taking it with or after food. If the label says to take it once a day this is usually best in the morning. If twice a day, make sure your second dose is no later than 4pm.

What are the alternatives to flupentixol?

There are many other medicines (e.g. SSRIs), talking therapies and treatments for depression and anxiety. See our "Handy charts" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will flupentixol take to work?

For depression, the effect will start in a week or two, and carry on building for the next few weeks. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will I need to keep taking flupentixol for?

This will really depend on what you are taking it for. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

Is flupentixol addictive?

Flupentixol is not addictive as such.

Can I stop taking flupentixol suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if you feel better. Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after flupentixol has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw flupentixol 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 flupentixol?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 4 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 have problems remembering your doses ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs that can be used to help you remember.

Will flupentixol affect my other medication?

Flupentixol has only a few interactions with other medicines:

- Flupentixol can cause more sleepiness if taken with alcohol or other sedative medicines e.g. benzodiazepines (e.g. temazepam, diazepam, lorazepam), zopiclone or zolpidem
- Flupentixol can have more side effects (such as dry mouth, blurred vision, constipation and difficulty passing urine) if taken with tricyclics (e.g. imipramine, lofepramine) or anticholinergics (e.g. procyclidine)
- Flupentixol can have more side effects if taken with other antipsychotics or metoclopramide
- Flupentixol can also affect the heart (so be careful with amiodarone, disopyramide, clarithromycin)
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and flupentixol.

This does not necessarily mean that this will happen in everyone or that some of these medicines can not be used together. It is just that you may need to follow your doctor's instructions very carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking flupentixol?

If you drink alcohol while taking flupentixol 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 flupentixol?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from flupentixol. The dose for depression and anxiety is low and so these side effects should be uncommon.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Sleepiness	Feeling sleepy or sluggish after taking a dose.	Do not drive or use machinery. Your doctor may consider changing your dose or medicine.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Insomnia	Not being able to get to sleep or stay asleep.	Take your dose or doses no later than 4pm. Discuss with your doctor.
Movement disorders (extra-pyramidal or Parkinsonian side effects)	Having shaky hands and feeling shaky. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own. You may feel restless.	It is not usually dangerous and is a well known side effect. If it is distressing or worries you, tell your doctor. He or she may be able to give you something for it e.g. an anticholinergic drug, or perhaps try a different medicine.
Dry mouth	Not enough saliva or spit.	Suck sugar-free gum or boiled sweets. This should wear off after a few weeks. You may be able to get a mouth spray.
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus your eyes properly.	Do not drive with blurred vision. This may wear off after a few weeks. See your doctor about this if it does not.
Weight gain	Eating more and putting on weight.	A diet full of vegetables and fibre may help prevent weight gain.
Hyperprolactin-aemia	Raised prolactin. In women, it can affect breasts (become bigger) and cause irregular or no periods, or cause impotence and chest changes in men.	This can be very distressing. Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her.
Postural hypotension	Low blood pressure. You feel faint when you stand up.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive. Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her.
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 and drinking enough fluid. Keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
RARE (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Skin rashes	Blotches seen on the skin.	Stop taking the flupentixol and see your doctor now.

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 flupentixol?

Some people who need to take higher doses occasionally need a blood test e.g. to check on some possible side effects such as prolactin levels, blood sugar etc.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking flupentixol?

You may feel sleepy and have slower reactions at first when taking flupentixol. It may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how flupentixol affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

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