

Perphenazine (pron. per-fen-aa-zeen)

What is perphenazine used for?

Perphenazine (also known as Fentazin[®]) is mainly used to help treat psychosis, which can be a symptom of many conditions e.g. schizophrenia and bipolar mania. It can also be used to help the symptoms of ADHD, psychotic depression, agitation and OCD, as well as anxiety, tension and agitation. It is one of a group of medicines known as antipsychotics or neuroleptics. It is only made as tablets.

What is the usual dose of perphenazine?

The usual dose of perphenazine is around 12-24mg a day, but this depends on what it is being used for.

How should I take perphenazine?

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 perphenazine?

Take your perphenazine as directed on the medicine label. Try to take it at regular times each day. 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 at bedtime as it may make you drowsy at first.

What are the alternatives to perphenazine?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. There are many other antipsychotics, talking therapies and treatments for psychosis and agitation. See our "Handy charts" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will perphenazine take to work?

Usually there will be some effect within a few days, with the effect building over 3-4 weeks. However, this will depend on what you are taking it for. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will I need to keep taking perphenazine 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 perphenazine addictive?

Perphenazine is not addictive as such. If you have taken it for a long time you may get some effects if you stop it suddenly. So-called "cholinergic rebound" can occur with perphenazine if stopped suddenly e.g. feeling sick, tiredness, sweating, anxiety and insomnia. It is usually mild and only last a few days. It is best to stop any antipsychotic slowly to let your brain get used to the change.

Can I stop taking perphenazine 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 perphenazine has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw perphenazine 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 perphenazine?

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 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.

Will perphenazine affect my other medication?

Perphenazine has a few interactions with other medicines. Perphenazine has many side effects. If it is taken with other medicines with the same side effects, then a combined effect can occur.

- Perphenazine 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, orphenadrine)
- Antipsychotics can also affect the heart (so be careful with amiodarone, disopyramide, clarithromycin)
- Beta-blockers, fluoxetine, itraconazole or venlafaxine can increase the effects of perphenazine
- Antacids (sometimes), carbamazepine, rifampicin or smoking can decrease the effect of perphenazine
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and perphenazine
- Perphenazine can be quite sedative, so be careful with sleeping tablets, tricyclics (e.g. dosulepin, imipramine, lofepramine), older antihistamines (e.g. promethazine), benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam), phenobarbital, melatonin or alcohol.

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 perphenazine?

If you drink alcohol while taking perphenazine 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 perphenazine?

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

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. It may be possible to change your dose or drug.
Movement disorders (extra-pyramidal side effects)	Having shaky hands. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own. You may feel very restless, or stiff.	It is not usually dangerous but 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 a medicine for it e.g. an anticholinergic medicine.
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 drink enough fluid. Keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
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 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.
FAIRLY COMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Raised prolactin (hyper-prolactinaemia)	It can affect breasts (including milk being leaked) and irregular or no periods in women, or cause impotence and chest changes in men.	It can be very distressing. Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her as it may possibly even affect your bones if prolactin is raised for a long time.
Postural hypotension	Low blood pressure. You may 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.
Palpitations	A fast heart beat.	It is not usually dangerous. It can be treated if it lasts a long time.
Sexual dysfunction	Finding it hard to have an orgasm. No desire for sex.	Discuss with your doctor.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Photosensitivity	Going blotchy in the sun. Getting sunburnt easily	Avoid direct sunlight or sun-lamps. Use a high factor sun block cream.
Skin rashes	Rashes seen on the skin.	Stop taking the perphenazine 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 perphenazine?

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. You might also need your blood pressure tested.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking perphenazine?

You may feel sleepy and have slower reactions at first when taking perphenazine. Until this wears off, or you know how perphenazine 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.