

Pirenzepine (pron. pie-wren-zee-peen)

What is pirenzepine used for?

Pirenzepine (also known as Gastrozepin[®]) is mainly used to help treat one of the side effects of clozapine i.e. having too much saliva. This is sometimes called siallorrhoea (pron. sigh-al-o-rear) or hypersalivation (pron. high-per-sally-vay-shun). It seems to be that some people taking clozapine don't swallow as well as they would do normally and so saliva builds up. This causes dribbling, especially at night. Pirenzepine was available in the UK until the early 2000s to help treat stomach ulcers. Better medicines have since come along and it isn't now used for that, but seems to be helpful for excess salivation. It is made as 50mg tablets.

What is the usual dose of pirenzepine?

The usual dose of pirenzepine for siallorrhoea is around 25-50mg twice a day (25mg is half a tablet).

How should I take pirenzepine?

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 pirenzepine?

Take your pirenzepine 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 pirenzepine with or after food, although about half an hour before food is probably best.

What are the alternatives to pirenzepine?

There are some other medicines and treatments for siallorrhoea e.g. hyoscine (Kwells[®]), amitriptyline, atropine, and anticholinergics such as procyclidine or orphenadrine.

How long will pirenzepine take to work?

Pirenzepine 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 pirenzepine for?

As long as you think or feel you need it for.

Is pirenzepine addictive?

Pirenzepine is not addictive.

Can I stop taking pirenzepine suddenly?

When the time comes, you should probably stop pirenzepine by a gradual reduction in the dose over a few days or so. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

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

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 (as 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.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking pirenzepine?

If you drink alcohol while taking pirenzepine 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.

Will pirenzepine affect my other medication?

Pirenzepine has very few interactions with other medicines.

- If pirenzepine is taken with benzodiazepines (e.g. lorazepam, diazepam), or alcohol, it may cause more sleepiness
 - You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and pirenzepine
- 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.

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

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

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. It can last for a few hours after taking your dose.	Don't drive or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take your pirenzepine at a different time.
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, 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 much saliva or spit.	Suck sugar-free gum or boiled sweets. If it is bad, your doctor may be able to give you a mouth spray.
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus your eyes properly.	Do not drive with blurred vision. This should wear off after a few weeks. If it does not wear off, see your doctor if you are worried.
Diarrhoea	Going to the toilet more than usual and passing loose, watery stools.	Drink plenty of water. Get advice from your pharmacist. If it lasts for more than a day or so, contact your doctor.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.

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 pirenzepine?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking pirenzepine, although you will do while you are having clozapine.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking pirenzepine?

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