

## Quetiapine (pron. que-tyre-pean)

### What is quetiapine used for?

Quetiapine (also known as Seroquel<sup>®</sup> and Seroquel XL<sup>®</sup>) can be used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis, schizophrenia, mania and bipolar depression, and to help stop these symptoms coming back. It can be used to help depression if used with other medicines. It is sometimes also used to help the symptoms of anxiety and dementia. It is made as plain tablets and a sustained release (XL) tablet.

### What is the usual dose of quetiapine?

The usual dose of quetiapine is around 600mg a day for psychosis/schizophrenia, 800mg a day for mania, and 300mg a day for bipolar depression. Sometimes 25-150mg a day is used for helping dementia and anxiety.

### How should I take quetiapine?

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. Do not chew the tablets.

### When should I take quetiapine?

Take your quetiapine as directed on the medicine label. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking quetiapine with or after food. The XL tablets can be taken once a day, usually best at bedtime as it may make you drowsy at first. The plain tablets should be taken twice a day, usually best in the morning and in the evening.

### What are the alternatives to quetiapine?

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

### How long will quetiapine take to work?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. It will usually start working within a couple of weeks, and the effect will build over 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 quetiapine for?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long you might need to take it for.

### Is quetiapine addictive?

Quetiapine is not addictive but stopping suddenly or missing doses can give you some symptoms (see below).

### Can I stop taking quetiapine suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if you feel better. Firstly, your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after quetiapine has been stopped. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Secondly, you might get some symptoms e.g. stomach upset, and difficulty sleeping. These should wear off. When the time comes, you should withdraw quetiapine by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks.

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

If you are taking the XL tablets, start again as soon as you remember if within about 12 hours. If you are taking the tablets, start again as soon as you remember if within about 4-6 hours. 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 quetiapine?

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

### Will quetiapine affect my other medication?

Quetiapine has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- The effect of quetiapine can be decreased by phenobarbital, phenytoin, rifampicin or carbamazepine
- The effects of quetiapine can sometimes be increased by erythromycin or ketoconazole

- Quetiapine can increase the effect of methadone (in a few people)
- If quetiapine is taken with benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam), sleeping tablets or alcohol, it will cause more sleepiness.
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and quetiapine.

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 quetiapine?

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

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Sleepiness	Feeling sleepy or sluggish. This can last for a few hours or longer after taking your dose.	Don't drive or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take quetiapine at a different time of day. Your doctor may be able to consider changing your dose. It should wear off after a while.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie or sit down if you feel it coming on. Don't drive.
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.
Weight gain	Eating more and putting on weight, especially just after you start quetiapine.	This is less common with quetiapine than similar drugs. A diet full of vegetables, cereal and fibre may help prevent weight gain.
Postural hypotension	A low blood pressure - this can make you feel dizzy, especially when you stand up.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, sit or lie down. Don't drive. This dizziness usually wears off in a few days.
<b>UNCOMMON</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Headache	When your head is painful and pounding.	Ask your pharmacist if it is safe to take paracetamol with any other medicines you may be taking.
Akathisia	Feeling restless, agitated or on edge.	Try and relax by taking deep breaths. Contact your doctor if it worries you.
Anticholinergic side effects	Dry mouth, blurred vision, constipation	These are usually mild and should wear off after a few weeks. If not, contact your doctor or pharmacist.
Stomach upset	This includes feeling and being sick and getting diarrhoea.	If it's mild, see your pharmacist. If it lasts for more than a day, see 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 quetiapine?

You may sometimes need to have a blood test, to check on some possible side effects e.g. blood sugar or cholesterol levels.

## Can I drive or cycle while I am taking quetiapine ?

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