

## Risperidone (pron. ris-perry-doan)

### What is risperidone used for?

Risperidone (also known as Risperdal<sup>®</sup>) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis, schizophrenia and mania, and to help stop these symptoms coming back. It is often also used to help the symptoms of ADHD, bipolar mood disorder, dementia and psychosis in depression. It is one of a group of medicines called antipsychotics or neuroleptics. It is made as tablets, melt-in-the-mouth tablets, a syrup and a long-acting injection (see a separate Handy PILL for the injection Risperdal Consta<sup>®</sup>).

### What is the usual dose of risperidone?

The usual dose of risperidone is around 4-6mg once a day. Much lower doses (e.g. 0.5mg-2mg a day) can be best in older people.

### How should I take risperidone?

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. For the liquid, use a medicine spoon, dropper or oral syringe. For the melt-in-the-mouth tablets, just put them on your tongue and they will dissolve quickly.

### When should I take risperidone?

Take your risperidone 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 risperidone 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 risperidone?

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

### How long will risperidone take to work?

This will depend on what you are taking it for but the effect usually starts in a week or so, and builds over several weeks. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

### How long will I need to keep taking risperidone for?

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

### Is risperidone addictive?

Risperidone is not addictive.

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

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 12 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 that can be used to help you remember.

### Can I drink alcohol while I am taking risperidone?

If you drink alcohol while taking risperidone 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 risperidone affect my other medication?

Risperidone has only a few interactions with other medicines:

- The effects of risperidone can sometimes be increased by fluoxetine, paroxetine or itraconazole
- The effect of risperidone can be decreased by rifampicin or carbamazepine
- If risperidone is taken with benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam), or alcohol, it will cause more sleepiness.
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and risperidone

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 risperidone?

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

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>VERY COMMON</b> ( <i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Postural hypotension	A low blood pressure - this can make you feel dizzy.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive.
Headache	When your head is painful and pounding.	Ask your pharmacist if paracetamol is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Akathisia	Being more on edge and restless. You may sweat more.	Try and relax by taking deep breaths. Wear loose fitting clothes.
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 something for it e.g. an anticholinergic medicine.
<b>COMMON</b> ( <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.
Sleepiness	Feeling sleepy or sluggish. It can last for a few hours after taking a dose.	Don't drive or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take your risperidone at a different time.
Weight gain	Eating more and putting on weight.	A diet full of vegetables and fibre may help prevent weight gain.
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.
<b>UNCOMMON</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i> )		
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't your eyes focus properly.	Don't drive. See your doctor if you are worried.
Sexual dysfunction	Finding it hard to have an orgasm. No desire for sex.	Discuss with your doctor.
Skin rashes	Blotches seen on the skin.	Stop taking it 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 risperidone?

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

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

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