**Pimozide** (say: pim-o-zyde)

**What is pimozide used for?**
- Pimozide (also called Orap®) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis or schizophrenia.
- Pimozide is made as tablets.

**What is the usual dose of pimozide?**
- The usual dose of pimozide is around 2-20mg a day.

**How should I take pimozide?**
- 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 pimozide?**
- Try to take pimozide at regular times each day.
- Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as it can be taken with or after food.
- If you take it once a day this is usually best at bedtime as it may make you drowsy at first.

**What are the alternatives to pimozide?**
- There are many other antipsychotics, talking therapies and treatments for psychosis and schizophrenia.

**How long will pimozide take to work?**
- You may feel less agitated and calmer soon after the first few doses but the full effects will build-up over a few weeks.

**How long will I need to keep taking it for?**
- Probably for several years or even longer.

**Is pimozide addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?**
- Pimozide is not addictive but 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 many months after the medicine has been stopped.

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**When the time comes, you should come off it by a gradual reduction in the dose over several months when your stress levels are low.**
- You should discuss this fully with your prescriber, doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

**See our handy fact sheet on ‘Coming off medicines’.**

**What should I do if I forget to take a dose of pimozide at the right time?**
- Start again as soon as you remember unless it is nearly time for your next dose then take the next dose as normal.
- Do not try to catch up by taking two or more doses at once as you may get more side-effects.

**If you often 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 pimozide?**
- If you drink alcohol while taking pimozide it may make you feel more sleepy.
- This is important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

**Will pimozide affect my other medication?**
Pimozide has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:
- If pimozide is taken with benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam) or alcohol, it may cause more sleepiness.
- Pimozide must not be taken with other antipsychotics, tricyclics and many other medicines that can affect the heart e.g. some antimalarials, some antihistamines, diuretics (water tablets) and heart drugs.

**Can I drive or cycle while I am taking pimozide?**
- You may feel a bit drowsy at first when taking it so be careful as it may slow down your reactions.
- Until this wears off, or you know how pimozide affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

**See our “Handy chart” for psychosis to help you compare the medicines available**
- This will help you talk to your prescriber, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

**If you often 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.**

**Please see the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) for the full possible list. 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.**
Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking pimozide?

- You might sometimes need to have a blood test to check on some possible side effects e.g. prolactin levels, blood sugar, etc.
- You will also need to have an ECG (heart monitored) before you start pimozide, and at least every year while you are still taking it.

What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking pimozide?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You must also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting slower may help. If you think you might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your prescriber, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side effect</th>
<th>What happens</th>
<th>What to do about it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VERY COMMON</strong> (more than about 1 in 10 people might get these)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleepiness</td>
<td>Feeling sleepy or sluggish. It can last for a few hours after taking a dose</td>
<td>Don't drive or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take your pimozide at a different time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement disorders (extra-pyramidal side effects)</td>
<td>Having shaky hands. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own. You may feel very restless, or stiff.</td>
<td>It is not dangerous but 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperhidrosis</td>
<td>Being very sweaty</td>
<td>Mention to your doctor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMON</strong> (fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postural hypotension</td>
<td>Low blood pressure - this can make you feel dizzy.</td>
<td>Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don’t drive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akathisia</td>
<td>Feeling more on edge and restless. You may sweat a lot more.</td>
<td>Try and relax by taking deep breaths. Wear loose fitting clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised prolactin (hyperprolactinaemia)</td>
<td>It can affect breasts (including milk being leaked) and irregular or no periods in women, or cause impotence and chest changes in men.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>When you cannot pass stools, or poo, regularly, or cannot completely empty your bowels.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RARE but important</strong> (can be serious if not dealt with quickly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTE - venous thromboembolism</td>
<td>• Chest pain, worse if you breathe deeply or cough</td>
<td>See your Doctor straight away. The symptoms could be caused by a blood clot moving around the body. It mostly happens in older people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coughing up blood</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Dizziness or fainting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Rapid breathing, short of breath or odd heartbeat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMS (Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome)</td>
<td>• Fever or high temperature, sweating and confusion</td>
<td>See your Doctor straight away if you have had a change in dose or taken other antipsychotics.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Racing heart beat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Muscle stiffness and difficulty moving.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>QTc prolongation</td>
<td>Unexpected dizziness, palpitations, vertigo, sudden fainting</td>
<td>See your doctor for a heart check up straight away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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