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Propranolol (say: pro-pran-o-loll) for anxiety

What is propranolol used for?

- Propranolol (also called Deralin® and Inderal®) is a beta-blocker and can be used in lower doses to help the symptoms of performance anxiety and general anxiety
- It does this by reducing your heart rate a little so it helps stop the feelings of anxiety and panic
- It is sometimes also used to help the symptoms of high blood pressure, angina and other heart problems
- It is made as tablets.

What is the usual dose of propranolol?

- The usual dose for performance anxiety is 10mg to 40mg 30 to 60 minutes before the event or performance
- The usual dose of propranolol for anxiety is around 10-40mg three times a day.

How should I take propranolol?

- Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing so they do not get stuck in your throat.

When should I take propranolol?

- Take your propranolol at regular times each day
- Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking propranolol with or after food.

What are the alternatives to propranolol?

- This will depend on what you are taking it for
- There are many other medicines (e.g. SSRIs, oxprenolol), talking therapies and treatments for anxiety.

☞ See our "Handy chart" for anxiety to help you compare the medicines available
☞ This will help you discuss your care with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

How long will propranolol take to work?

- For performance anxiety, the effect will start in about 30-60 minutes.

How long will I need to keep taking it for?

- This will depend on what you are taking it for
- For anxiety, it will be for as long as you think you want or need it for.

Is propranolol addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?

- Propranolol is not addictive as such 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 after propranolol has been stopped
- When the time comes, you should withdraw propranolol by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks
- You should discuss this fully with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

See our handy fact sheet on 'Coming off medicines'

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of propranolol at the right time?

- If you are taking propranolol regularly for anxiety, take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 3-4 hours of your next dose
- If you remember after this time, 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 (many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or case manager about this. Webster, other packs and Apps can help you.

Will propranolol affect my other medication?

Propranolol has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- Make sure your doctor knows about any heart, breathing, thyroid or diabetic problems you have had in the past e.g. you should not normally take a beta-blocker if you have asthma
- Propranolol can interact with some other drugs e.g. for high blood pressure, glaucoma and some antidepressants.

You **must** also see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet for the full list of interactions. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you must follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

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Can I drink alcohol while I am taking it?

- If you drink alcohol, it might slightly reduce the effect of propranolol.

Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking propranolol?

- You should not need a blood test while you are taking propranolol.

Can I drive, cycle or operate a boat while I am taking propranolol?

- You may feel a bit sleepy at first when taking propranolol
- You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times
- Until this wears off, or you know how propranolol affects you, do not drive or operate machines.

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

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the Consumer Information Leaflet (CMI) for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Others may get some that are not listed. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think you might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your doctor, pharmacist or case manager.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
VERY COMMON *(fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)*		
Fatigue	You feel tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.
Cold extremities	Your toes and fingers feel cold.	This may happen early on in treatment and should go away. If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.
COMMON *(fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)*		
Stomach upset	This includes feeling sick and getting diarrhoea (the runs, passing loose bowel motions).	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor.
Sleep disturbances	You can't sleep very well and may have nightmares	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint, especially when you stand up.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Don't drive. Let your doctor know next time you meet.
RARE but important *(can be serious if not dealt with quickly)*		
Wheeziness	When you find it difficult to breathe, and your chest feels tight.	This may happen if you have asthma. Contact your doctor now.
Bradycardia	A very slow pulse rate (under 50 beats per minute).	Contact your doctor now.

☎ **Lifeline** provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit www.lifeline.org.au for information & downloads

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about propranolol. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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