

## **Patient Information on MAOI Antidepressants**

Tranlycypromine (Parnate®), Phenelzine (Nardil®)

### **What is this medication used for?**

This medication belongs to the class of medications called irreversible monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) antidepressants. They are used for:

- Depression (Major Depressive Disorder or Bipolar Depression)

This medication is usually taken one to three times a day. The medication can be taken with or without food.

### **How will this medication help me?**

This medication can help symptoms such as:

- Depressive symptoms - low mood, changes in appetite and sleep, low energy, difficulty concentrating, decreased interest in normal activities, feelings of guilt

### **When will the medication start working?**

Antidepressants may improve sleep, appetite and energy within 1-2 weeks after reaching an adequate dose; however, feelings of low mood and anxiety may take 4-12 weeks to fully improve.

Because the medication takes time to work, do not change the dose or stop the medication without discussing this with your doctor. Your doctor may increase or decrease the medication slowly to decrease side effects. Stopping the medication suddenly may result in uncomfortable withdrawal effects like muscle aches, tingling feelings, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, sleep disturbances, headache, tremor or anxiety.

### **How long should I take this medication for?**

After a first episode of depression, it is recommended that the antidepressant be continued for at least one year; this prevents a relapse of the depression. For people who have had several episodes of depression, lifelong treatment with medication is recommended. Do not stop the medication without discussing it first with your doctor - some antidepressants need to be tapered slowly to avoid side effects. For bipolar depression, ask your doctor about how long you should take the medication. If you do stop the medication, continue the food and medication restrictions for 14 days after stopping the MAOI.

### **Side effects:**

Many side effects are worse at the start of treatment and get better or disappear over a few weeks. If a side effect continues, speak to your doctor about how to manage it.

- Drowsiness / feeling tired (more likely with phenelzine) – Usually improves over time. Ask your doctor about changing the dosing times closer to bedtime.
- Energized, anxious or agitated feeling (more likely with tranylcypromine) – Some people may feel nervous or have difficulty sleeping for a few days after starting the medication. Let your doctor know; you may need to take your medication at different times.
- Dizziness / low blood pressure – Get up from a lying or sitting position slowly. Sit or lie down if dizziness persists. Let your doctor know if dizziness is severe.
- Dry mouth – Ice cubes, sipping water, and sugarless gum help increase saliva in your mouth (avoid sweet juices or pop). For severe dry mouth, moisture sprays / gels for the mouth can be bought at a pharmacy – ask the pharmacist about what products are available.
- Constipation – Increase bulk foods in your diet (vegetables, brown breads, fruit) and drink plenty of water. If constipation is still a problem, consult your doctor or pharmacist.
- Nausea – Usually goes away with time. Taking medication with a meal may help.
- Weight gain (more common with phenelzine) – Some people gain weight on this medication. If you gain weight, choose healthier, non-processed foods and avoid sugary drinks and junk food.
- Decrease in sex drive or sexual function (more common with phenelzine) – Discuss this with your doctor if it occurs.

This is not a complete list of side effects. If you feel unwell, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

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

If you take your total dose once a day in the morning, you can take it later the same day if you remember. If you take the drug several times a day and miss a dose, then skip that dose and continue with your regular schedule. Never double a dose.

### **Interactions with other medications and food**

Certain foods and drugs contain chemicals or proteins that, when combined with taking this medication, could cause a sudden raise in blood pressure and a dangerous reaction called a “hypertensive crisis”. If a hypertensive crisis occurs, the symptoms usually come on suddenly. The symptoms are:

- Severe, throbbing headache which starts at the back of the head and moves forward; nausea and vomiting often occurs (headache is usually the first symptom)
- Neck stiffness
- Heart palpitations, fast heart beat, chest pain
- Sweating, cold and clammy skin
- Enlarged (dilated) pupils of the eyes
- Sudden unexplained nosebleeds

If a combination of these symptoms does occur, contact your doctor immediately; if you are unable to do so, go to the Emergency Department of the nearest hospital.

A list of foods to be avoided will be given to you. You must avoid these foods while you take this medication and for 14 days after stopping the medication.

**Do not use ANY medications, including non prescription cold medications or herbal / health food store medicines, without consulting your doctor or pharmacist first.** Always inform any doctor or dentist you see that you are taking this medication.

Do not use the following over-the-counter drugs without prior consultation with your doctor or pharmacist:

- Cough and cold medications that contain decongestants (e.g. pseudoephedrine) (includes nasal sprays and drops), some antihistamines
- cough suppressants (cough products containing “DM” or dextromethorphan)
- wake-up pills, stimulants, or appetite suppressants (diet pills)
- sleep aids and sedatives
- yeast, dietary supplements / diet foods

It is safe to use plain ASA (aspirin), acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), throat lozenges, and antacids.

## Other Precautions

- Do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery if you feel drowsy or slowed down.
- This drug may increase the effects of alcohol, making you feel more sleepy, dizzy or lightheaded.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become pregnant or intend to become pregnant.

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This list is provided by Sunnybrook as a guideline to assist patients. Patients should always seek professional advice on the appropriate diet for their particular circumstances.

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