

Patient Information on Trazodone

(generic brands)

What is this medication used for?

This medication belongs to the class of medications called serotonin-2 antagonist/reuptake inhibitors (SARI) antidepressants. The most common conditions it is used for are:

- Depression (Major Depressive Disorder or Bipolar Depression)
- Insomnia (difficulty sleeping at night)

This medication is usually taken once a day at bedtime, although when used for depression it may be given 2 or 3 times a day. The medication can be taken with or without food; taking with food may lessen stomach upset at the beginning of treatment, but may slow down the effect of making you feel sleepy.

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
- Insomnia - difficulty sleeping at night

When will the medication start working?

When used for sleep, you may see an improvement in sleep right away. Antidepressants used for depression may improve sleep, appetite and energy within 1-2 weeks after reaching an adequate dose; however, feelings of low mood or 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.

If you are taking this medication for sleep, it may be used as a scheduled medication or a medication only used if you have trouble sleeping that night (“as needed” use).

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 and feeling tired – May lessen with time. May be desired effect with this medication. If you are taking more than one dose per day, speak to your doctor about changing dosing times or taking the majority of the dose at bedtime.
- Energized, anxious or agitated feeling – Some people may feel nervous or have difficulty sleeping for a few days after starting the medication.
- Dizziness - Get up from a lying or sitting position slowly. Sit or lie down if dizziness persists.
- Nausea – Usually goes away with time. Taking medication with food may help.
- Headache – Usually is temporary. Can be managed with painkillers (e.g. acetaminophen / Tylenol®).
- 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.
- Suicidal thinking - A small percentage of young adults (24 or younger) may have an increase in suicidal thinking and behaviour after starting certain classes of antidepressants. In studies, this happens in about 4% of young adults compared to 2% taking a placebo (dummy pill). Young adults should be closely monitored when starting an antidepressant. Anyone with new or worsening suicidal thoughts should contact their doctor immediately.

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 the medication several times a day and forget a daytime dose, skip it and continue with your next dose; never double a dose. If you take your total dose in the evening and you forget it, take it the next day in the evening as usual.

Interactions with other medications

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medications you are taking, including herbal remedies and medications that you can buy at the pharmacy. Always inform any doctor or dentist you see that you are taking this medication.

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.
- Avoid eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice if you are taking this medication. Grapefruit juice can increase the levels of these medications in your body.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become pregnant or intend to become pregnant.

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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