

## **Patient Information on Vilazodone**

(Viibryd®)

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

This medication belongs to the class of medications called serotonin-1A partial agonist/serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SPARI) antidepressants. It is used to treat:

- Depression (Major Depressive Disorder)

This medication is usually taken once a day with food. Food helps your body absorb more of the medication and lessens stomach side effects.

### **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. If you are taking antidepressants for other reasons, check with your doctor about how long to take it; most people require at least one year of treatment.

### **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.

- Stomach side effects (nausea and diarrhea more common; vomiting, abdominal pain, indigestion is less common) – Most likely to start in the first 2 weeks of treatment, and should get better and go away over time. Your doctor may increase the dose slowly over the first few weeks to reduce stomach side effects. Take medication with food.
- Energized or agitated feeling – Some people may feel nervous or have difficulty sleeping for a few days after starting the medication. If the medication disturbs your sleep or if you get nightmares, take it in the morning.
- 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.
- Dizziness - Get up from a lying or sitting position slowly. Sit or lie down if dizziness persists.
- Drowsiness and feeling tired – Usually improves with time. Take dose at bedtime if this happens.
- Headache – Usually is temporary. Can be managed with painkillers (e.g. Tylenol®).
- Decreases in sex drive or sexual performance – Discuss this with your doctor
- Agitated, suicidal or disturbed thinking – In rare cases, some people have experienced a worsening of their mental state after starting an antidepressant. This effect may be more likely in younger people (24 or younger). Anyone with new or worsened distressing symptoms (suicidal or self-harm thoughts, severe agitation, impulsivity, or thoughts of harm to others) 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 your total dose in the morning and you forgot it, take it if you remember later in the same day. 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.
  - 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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