

Ativan (lorazepam)

Brand and Generic Names:

- Brand Name = Ativan®

Tablets- 0.5 mg, 1 mg, 2 mg

Injection- 2 mg/mL, 4mg/mL

- Brand Name = Lorazepam Intensol®

Oral Liquid- 2 mg/mL

- Generic Name = lorazepam

What is Ativan® and what does it treat?

Lorazepam is an antianxiety agent that belongs to the class of medications called benzodiazepines (ben-zoe-dye-AZE-eh-peens). Similar medications include Valium® (diazepam), Xanax® (alprazolam), and Klonopin® (clonazepam). Lorazepam is used to treat symptoms of anxiety, irritability, and insomnia. It may also be used to calm people before surgical procedures. . Lorazepam is also used to prevent severe alcohol withdrawal symptoms (delirium tremens, or “DTs”), and to stop convulsions in people with epilepsy.

What is the most important information I should know about Ativan®?

1. Take your medication exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider to avoid relapse of the symptoms for which you are taking lorazepam.
2. Only your healthcare provider can determine the length of lorazepam treatment that is right for you.
3. Do not stop taking lorazepam or change your dose without talking to your healthcare provider first.
4. Stopping lorazepam abruptly can result in one or more of the following withdrawal effects: insomnia, irritability, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, sweating,

restlessness, light-headedness, abdominal and muscle cramps, tremors, behavioral disturbances, and seizures. This is why it is important to gradually decrease the dose of lorazepam, rather than abruptly stop.

5. Lorazepam treatment must be monitored by a healthcare provider. Be sure to keep all of your scheduled appointments while on lorazepam.
6. You should not take illegal drugs or drink alcohol while taking lorazepam.

Are there specific concerns about Ativan® and pregnancy?

If you are taking lorazepam and would like to become pregnant, discuss your plans with your healthcare provider to weigh the risk versus benefits of the decision. The risks and benefits of the illness, medications, and the risks to the fetus may interact. This is a complex decision as untreated panic disorder, or other psychiatric or medical disorders, may also have risk to the mother and fetus.

Several studies have indicated there is an increased risk of congenital malformations when lorazepam is taken during pregnancy. If lorazepam is used during pregnancy, or if you become pregnant while taking lorazepam, you should ask your healthcare provider about the potential hazards to the fetus.

Children that are born to mothers taking lorazepam may experience withdrawal symptoms shortly after birth. These symptoms may include: decreased muscle tone, breathing and feeding difficulties, and decreased body temperature.

Lorazepam passes into breast milk during breast feeding, and it is not recommended for mothers taking lorazepam to breast feed their infants.

What should I discuss with my healthcare provider before taking Ativan®?

1. Symptoms that are most bothersome to you about your condition
2. If you have thoughts of suicide
3. The medications you have taken in the past for treatment of panic disorder, anxiety disorders, or other conditions being treated with lorazepam.
4. Any medical problems you have.
5. All other medications you are currently taking (including herbals and dietary supplements) and any medication allergies you have
6. If you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding
7. Any medication side effects you may have experienced in the past or are currently experiencing
8. If you drink alcohol or use illegal drugs

How should I take Ativan®?

1. Lorazepam may be taken once, twice, three or four times daily, depending on why you are taking the medication.
2. Lorazepam may be taken with or without food.
3. Use a pillbox or calendar to help you remember to take your medication.

What happens if I miss a dose of Ativan®?

If you miss a dose of lorazepam, take it as soon as you remember, but only if it is not closer to when your next dose is due. If it is close to your next dose, wait until then to take the medication and skip the missed dose. Do not take double your next dose or take more than your prescribe dose. Discussing this scenario with your healthcare provider ahead of time is advised.

What should I avoid while taking Ativan®?

1. Use caution while driving. In some patients, lorazepam may cause dizziness, drowsiness, and slowed reaction time. Make sure you know how you react to this medication before you drive, operate machinery, or do other activities that may be dangerous if you are not alert.
2. Avoid drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs as this may increase sedation, toxicity and the risk of overdose.
3. Avoid skipping or missing doses of this medication.

What happens if I overdose with Ativan®?

If an overdose occurs, whether intentional or accidental, immediate medical attention is necessary. Call your doctor or emergency medical service (911). You may also contact the poison control center (1-800-222-1222).

Symptoms of overdose include confusion, impaired coordination, slow reflexes, dizziness and possibly falling. In severe cases, coma and death have occurred. Alcohol significantly increases the toxicity of benzodiazepine overdose.

What are the possible side effects of Ativan®?

Common side effects of alprazolam include drowsiness, dizziness, depression, fatigue, memory problems, nervousness, impaired coordination, and decreased ability to concentrate. These side effects will often decrease or go away after the first few weeks as your body adjusts to the medication.

Talk with your healthcare provider if you experience any side effects that are bothersome to you.

Are there any risks for taking Ativan® for long periods of time?

Alprazolam is a Schedule IV controlled substance, similar to other benzodiazepine medications, such as Librium®, Ativan®, Valium®, and Klonopin®. There is a risk of physical and psychological dependence when it is taken for long periods of time. Sudden discontinuation of alprazolam may result in withdrawal symptoms, such as insomnia, light-headedness, irritability, vomiting, sweating, restlessness, abdominal and muscle cramps, tremors, behavioral disturbances, and seizures.

What other medications interact with Ativan®?

Other medications or substances that may cause drowsiness may interact with alprazolam to cause excessive drowsiness, or dizziness. These could include: alcohol, antihistamines (such as diphenhydramine), narcotic pain medication (such as morphine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone), barbiturates (such as phenobarbital), sleeping medications (such as zolpidem), antianxiety medications, antipsychotic medications, certain anticonvulsant medications, and tricyclic antidepressant medications (such as amitriptyline).

Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking other medications with lorazepam.

How long does it take for Ativan® to work?

The onset of action usually occurs within 20 to 60 minutes. Although you may experience beneficial effects from alprazolam within a few days of starting to take the medication, it often takes several weeks to get the full effect of the medication. Your healthcare provider may also need to gradually adjust the dose over a period of several weeks to find the dose that works best for you.

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NAMI wishes to thank the [College of Psychiatric and Neurological Pharmacists](#) for producing this fact sheet.

Reviewed by Dr. Ken Duckworth, NAMI Medical Director

For further information. Please contact the pharmaceutical company listed below.

Wyeth

5 Giralda Farms
Madison, NJ 07940

1-800-934-5556

www.wyeth.com

Free or low-cost medications provided by pharmaceutical companies

Some pharmaceutical companies offer medication assistance programs to low-income individuals and families. These programs typically require a doctor's consent and proof of financial status. They may also require that you have either no health insurance, or no prescription drug benefit through your health insurance. Please contact the pharmaceutical company directly for specific eligibility requirements and application information.

Ativan Rx Assistance Program: (800) 568-9938