Geodon (ziprasidone)

FDA ALERT [04/2005]  Geodon is a type of medicine called an atypical antipsychotic. FDA has found that older patients treated with atypical antipsychotics for dementia had a higher chance for death than patients who did not take the medicine. This is not an approved use.

Brand/Generic Names

- Brand name: Geodon®

Available as:

Capsules: 20 mg, 40 mg, 60 mg, 80 mg

Injection: 20 mg/5 mL

- Generic name = ziprasidone

What is ziprasidone and what does it treat?

Ziprasidone is an atypical antipsychotic medication approved to treat schizophrenia, acute agitation associated with schizophrenia (injection), and acute manic and mixed episodes of bipolar disorder. Ziprasidone can improve symptoms of schizophrenia such as: hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking; in some people, improvement in social isolation, reduced speech productivity and motivation can also occur. For Bipolar disorder, ziprasidone can improve symptoms of mania.

A manic episode, or mania, is when a person experiences several of the following symptoms at the same time: “high” or irritable mood, very high self esteem, decreased need for sleep, pressure to keep talking, racing thoughts, being easily distracted, frequently involved in activities with a large risk for bad consequences (for example,
excessive buying sprees). A mixed episode is when symptoms of mania and depression occur together such as an agitated depression.

While not approved by the FDA for other uses, ziprasidone may be used alone or with other medications to treat other symptoms such as agitation or other behavior problems in older persons with memory loss or people with developmental disabilities, children with mental illnesses like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, or depression. It may also be used for long-term management of bipolar disorder.

**What is the most important information I should know about ziprasidone?**

Relapse is very common in schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and the most frequent cause is from patients stopping their medication. Even when medication is taken exactly as prescribed, relapse may still occur for some people. Therefore it is recommended that you take your medication exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider since this has been shown to delay relapse.

Also:

- Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder require long-term treatment. Only your healthcare provider can determine the length of ziprasidone treatment that is right for you.
- Ziprasidone treatment must be monitored by a healthcare provider. Be sure to keep all of your scheduled appointments so that you stay healthy while on ziprasidone.
- Do not stop taking ziprasidone or change your dose without talking to your healthcare provider first.
- Some people may develop side effects on ziprasidone known as extrapyramidal effects (restlessness, tremor, stiffness) or tardive dyskinesia (slow or jerky movements that one cannot control). These symptoms are likely to be less severe and occur less often than with the older antipsychotic medications (e.g., Haldol® [haloperidol], Prolxin® [fluphenazine], Thorazine® [chlorpromazine]). If you develop movements that you cannot control or are uncomfortable, call your healthcare provider immediately.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have any heart conditions or diabetes. These illnesses may make ziprasidone unsafe for you to take.
- Ziprasidone treatment may be associated with an increased risk of death in elderly people with dementia and accompanying Behavior problems. This safety concern has not been proven confidently, but there is some supportive evidence. Talk with your health care provider if you are concerned or have questions.
- You should not take illegal drugs or drink alcohol while taking ziprasidone.

**What should I discuss with my healthcare provider before taking ziprasidone?**

- Symptoms that are bothersome to you about your condition
- Any medical problems you have.
• If you have thoughts of suicide
• Medications you have taken in the past to treat schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, whichever applies to you.
• All other medications you are currently taking and any medication allergies you have.
• Any new medication that you start while being treated with ziprasidone.
• Any medication side effects that you may have experienced in the past, or are currently experiencing.
• If you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding.
• If you drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.

How should I take ziprasidone?

• Ziprasidone is usually taken two times a day. Your body will absorb ziprasidone better if it is taken with food. Your healthcare provider will determine the dose that is right for you based upon your response.
• Use a pillbox or calendar to help you remember to take your medication.

What happens if I miss a dose of ziprasidone?

If you miss a dose of ziprasidone take it as soon as you remember, but only if it is not too close to when your next dose is due. You and your healthcare provider need to decide what “too close” is for you. If it is close too your next dose, wait until then to take the medication and skip the missed dose. Do not double your next dose or take more than your prescribed dose.

What should I avoid while taking ziprasidone?

• Ziprasidone may cause dizziness or drowsiness, especially when first starting the medication. Make sure you know how you react to the medication before you drive, operate machinery, or do other activities that may be dangerous if you are not alert.
• Avoid drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs while taking ziprasidone.

What happens if I overdose with ziprasidone?

• If an overdose occurs, whether intentional or accidental, immediate medical attention is necessary. Call your doctor or emergency medical service (911).
• Symptoms that may occur in an overdose include: extrapyramidal movements (restlessness, tremor and/or stiffness), sleepiness, and nervousness. Another concern with an overdose of ziprasidone would be “QT prolongation” and possible serious changes in the rhythm of the heart.
What are the possible side effects of ziprasidone?

Some of the most common side effects associated with ziprasidone are feeling unusually tired, nausea, constipation, dizziness, restlessness, diarrhea, rash, cough and runny nose, and abnormal muscle movements, including tremor, shuffling, and uncontrollable movements.

Important Warnings:

- The FDA has found that older patients treated with atypical antipsychotics for dementia had a higher chance for death than patients who did not take the medicine. This is not an approved use.
- Ziprasidone can cause “QT prolongation” which can be associated with fatal heart rhythms. Patients who are taking other medications known to cause QT prolongation, or have had a history of QT prolongation, a recent heart attack, or heart failure should not take ziprasidone.
- Ziprasidone may be associated with the neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) or tardive dyskinesia (TD). NMS is a rare condition in which patients may experience extreme muscle rigidity, high body temperatures, confusion, and cardiovascular difficulties. The important concern about NMS is that it is a potentially fatal condition. TD is an uncommon adverse effect in which patients may experience abnormal involuntary muscle movements—the mouth, tongue and jaw are common areas affected. In some instances, TD may be irreversible.
- Ziprasidone may cause increases in blood sugar and diabetes in some patients. A related condition to diabetes is the metabolic syndrome. Atypical antipsychotics like ziprasidone are believed to be associated with these conditions which may increase a person’s risk for serious heart disease.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you experience side effects that are bothersome to you. Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you develop a skin reaction, fever, swelling, or shortness of breath.

Are there any risks for taking ziprasidone for long periods of time?

Beyond the risks described above, there are no other known risks for taking ziprasidone for long periods of time. However, if anything new or unusual happens that you think might be due to medications you are taking, talk with your healthcare provider as soon as possible.

What other drugs may interact with this ziprasidone?

Medications that can cause increases in ziprasidone levels or cardiac effects include:

- Prozac® (fluoxetine)
- Luvox® (fluvoxamine)
- Erythromycin
- Biaxin® (clarithromycin)
• Cardizem® (diltiazem)
• Calan® (verapamil)
• Nizoral® (ketoconazole)
• Sporanox® (itraconazole)
• Posicor® (mibefradil)
• Cordarone® (amiodarone)
• Crixivan® (indinavir)
• Viracept® (nelfinavir)
• Norvir® (ritonavir)

If one of the above drug interactions does happen, then you might experience increases in side effects from ziprasidone.

Medications that can cause decreases in ziprasidone levels include:

• Tegretol®, Equetro® (carbamazepine)
• Dilantin® (phenytoin)
• Phenobarbital
• Mycobutin® (rifabutin)
• Rifadin®/Rimactane®/Rofact® (rifampin/rifampicin)
• St. John’s Wort
• Rezulin® (troglitazone)

If one of the above drug interactions does happen, then you might experience increases in symptoms that ziprasidone is meant to treat.

**How long does it take for ziprasidone to work?**

Several weeks are often required for ziprasidone to reach its maximum effectiveness; however, improvement in some symptoms may occur sooner.

*Updated by Charles F. Caley, Pharm.D., BCPP*
*(January 2007)*

---

*NAMI wishes to thank the **College of Psychiatric and Neurological Pharmacists** for producing this fact sheet.*
For further information please contact the pharmaceutical company listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pfizer, Inc.</th>
<th>235 East 42nd St.</th>
<th>800-438-1985</th>
<th><a href="http://www.pfizer.com">www.pfizer.com</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10017-5755</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Geodon Rx Assistance Program: 1-866-706-2400