

AMISULPRIDE ('Solian') *Am - ee - sul - pride*

SULPIRIDE ('Dolmatil') *Sul - pi - ride*

Why have I been prescribed amisulpride or sulpiride?

Amisulpride and sulpiride are medicines used to help treat schizophrenia and similar conditions, such as psychosis.

When they have schizophrenia, many people hear voices talking to them or about them. They may also become suspicious or paranoid. Some people also have problems with their thinking and feel that other people can read their thoughts. These are called "positive symptoms". Amisulpride and sulpiride can help to relieve these symptoms. Many people with schizophrenia also experience "negative symptoms". They feel tired and lacking in energy and may become quite inactive and withdrawn. Amisulpride and sulpiride may help relieve these symptoms as well.

Amisulpride and sulpiride are sometimes prescribed for people who have had bad side effects with older antipsychotics, such as unpleasant movements and shaking.

What exactly are amisulpride and sulpiride?

Amisulpride and sulpiride are antipsychotics from a class of medicines called the benzamides. Schizophrenia and similar disorders are sometimes referred to as psychoses, hence the name given to this group of medicines, which is the "antipsychotics". They are sometimes also called the neuroleptics or (incorrectly) major tranquillisers.

Amisulpride and sulpiride are similar in the way they work. Sulpiride has been available for many years, while amisulpride is newer. The trade or brand name of amisulpride is 'Solian'. The trade or brand names of sulpiride include 'Dolmatil', 'Sulpitil' and 'Sulparex'.

Are amisulpride and sulpiride safe to take?

It is usually safe to have amisulpride or sulpiride regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but they don't suit everyone. Let your doctor know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have epilepsy, Parkinson's Disease, or suffer from kidney trouble or have a condition called phaeochromocytoma;
- If you are taking any other medication. This includes medicines from your pharmacist, such as antihistamines;
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

What is the usual dose of amisulpride and sulpiride?

For amisulpride, the usual dose is 400mg to 800mg a day. Some people need to be on a lower dose such as 50mg to 300mg a day. The maximum total daily dose is 1200mg. Amisulpride is usually taken twice a day.

For sulpiride, the usual dose is 400mg to 800mg a day. The maximum total daily dose is 2400mg. Sulpiride is usually taken twice a day.

How should I take amisulpride or sulpiride?

Look at the label on your medicine. It should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow this advice carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Normally medicines are dispensed with an information leaflet for you to read.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Never change your dose without checking with your doctor. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time.

What will happen to me when I start taking amisulpride or sulpiride?

Antipsychotics do not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some of the symptoms to reduce. To begin with, most people find that this medication will help them feel more relaxed and calm. Later, after one or two weeks, other symptoms should begin to improve.

Unfortunately, you might get some side effects before you start to feel any better. Most side effects should go away after a few weeks. Look at the table over the page. It tells you what to do if you get any of the usual side effects. Not everyone will get the side effects shown. There are many other possible side effects. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.

Side effect	What is it?	What should I do if this happens to me?
COMMON		
INSOMNIA or AGITATION	Feeling restless or not being able to get to sleep at night.	Discuss with your doctor. They may change the time of your dose.
MOVEMENT DISORDERS	Feeling shaky or having a tremor. Your neck may twist back. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own.	Your doctor may be able to give you something for it. Alternatively, your doctor can change your medication to one that doesn't have this side effect.
RAISED PROLACTIN	Prolactin is a natural chemical we all have. High levels can affect periods in women or cause impotence in men. It may also cause breast tenderness and milk secretion, in men as well as women.	This sometimes wears off in a few weeks, but discuss this with your doctor anyway. It may be that a change in dose or different drug will help.
UNCOMMON		
AKATHISIA	You feel restless, unable to feel comfortable unless you are moving.	Tell your doctor about this. It may be possible to change your drug or dose, or give you something to reduce these feelings.
CONSTIPATION	Feeling "bunged up" inside. You can't pass a motion or stool.	Eat more fibre e.g. bran, fruit and vegetables. Do more walking. Make sure you drink plenty of fluid. A mild laxative from a pharmacy might help.
DROWSINESS	Feeling sleepy or sluggish. It can last for a few hours after taking your dose	Don't drive or use machinery. Ask your doctor if you can take your medicine at a different time.
NAUSEA and VOMITING	Feeling sick or being sick.	Taking each dose with or after food may help. If it is bad, contact your doctor.
RARE		
HYPOTENSION	A low blood pressure. You may feel faint when you stand up.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive. This dizziness is not dangerous
NMS	Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome includes a high body temperature, muscle stiffness and being unable to move.	It usually occurs within a few weeks of a dose change. Contact your doctor immediately. Keep cool, with fans or cool water.
WEIGHT GAIN	Eating more and putting on weight, especially just after you start taking amisulpride or sulpiride.	Avoid fatty foods like chocolate, crisps and fizzy drinks. A diet full of vegetables and fibre will usually help, as will physical activities such as walking. If it becomes a problem or you are worried, ask to see a dietician.

What about alcohol?

It is normally recommended that if you are taking amisulpride or sulpiride you should not drink alcohol. This is because amisulpride, sulpiride and alcohol can all cause drowsiness. If amisulpride or sulpiride are taken with alcohol, severe drowsiness will occur. This can lead to falls or accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol often makes psychosis worse. Excessive drinking is especially likely to do this. Once you are used to this medication, you may find that small amounts of alcohol do not cause any problems with it. It is, however, best to avoid alcohol altogether for the first one or two months that you are taking it. It pays to be very cautious if you do decide to drink because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication.

Don't stop taking your medication because you fancy a drink. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. If you do drink alcohol, drink only small amounts. Never drink any alcohol and drive.

When I feel better, can I stop taking amisulpride or sulpiride?

If you stop taking amisulpride or sulpiride suddenly your original symptoms are likely to return, but this may not be for 3 to 6 months after you stop the drug. You and your doctor should decide together when you should come off it. Most people need to be on amisulpride or sulpiride for quite a long time, sometimes years. This is not thought to be harmful.

Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet you may find a lot of information there as well, but be careful, as internet based information is not always accurate.



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