

Olanzapine (Zyprexa)

About This Drug

Olanzapine is a medication used to prevent nausea and vomiting (throwing up) during chemotherapy treatment. It is also used for psychiatric disorders in larger doses and for a longer duration of time. It is given orally (by mouth) when used during chemotherapy, but also can be given intramuscularly (IM) when used for psychiatric disorders.

Possible Side Effects

- Extreme tiredness or feeling sleepy
- Feeling dizzy
- Feeling restless
- Tremor
- Headache
- Low blood pressure. You may feel dizzy.
- Weight gain
- Increased appetite (increased hunger)
- Dry mouth
- Constipation (unable to move bowels)

Note: *Not all possible side effects are included above.*

Warnings and Precautions

- Elderly patients with dementia are at an increased risk of life-threatening events when taking this drug.
- This drug may cause a serious condition called neuroleptic malignant syndrome which is rare. Symptoms may be confusion, fever, muscle stiffness, increased sweating and/or fast heartbeat. **Contact your doctor right away if you have these symptoms.**
- Increase in your cholesterol and triglycerides level
- Increase in a hormone called prolactin, which can cause swelling of your breasts, absence of menses, decreased bone density, and erectile dysfunction (impotence).
- Blood sugar levels may change. If you have diabetes, changes may need to be made to your diabetes medication.

- This drug may cause a decrease in the number of white blood cells. This may increase your risk of infection.
- This drug can very rarely cause a severe skin reaction. Symptoms include fever, rash, or and/or swelling. Contact your medical team right away if you have these symptoms.
- Tardive dyskinesia – unusual and/or involuntary movements such as lip smacking, grimacing and/or eye blinking. The risk of developing this syndrome increases with the increased amount of drug taken and the longer it is taken. This is very rare and may rarely be permanent.
- This drug may cause unusual thinking or alter your decision making.
- Low blood pressure when standing or sitting
- Increased risk for falls, fractures, or other injuries
- Seizure. This is very rare in smaller doses of olanzapine. Common symptoms of a seizure can include confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. There are other less common symptoms of seizures. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**

Note: Some of the side effects above are very rare and are more common with higher doses. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

Important Information

- This drug may impair your ability to drive or use machinery. Use caution and tell your nurse or doctor if you feel dizzy, very sleepy, and/or experience low blood pressure. Avoid alcoholic beverages.

How to Take Your Medication

- Swallow the medicine with or without food daily.
- **Missed dose:** If you vomit or miss a dose, take your next dose at the regular time. Do not take 2 doses at the same time, instead, continue with your regular dosing schedule and contact your physician.
- **Storage:** Store this medicine in the original container at room temperature and protect it from light and moisture.

Treating Side Effects

- If you are dizzy, get up slowly after sitting or lying.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about medicines that are available to help stop or lessen constipation.
- If you are not able to move your bowels, check with your doctor or nurse before you use enemas, laxatives, or suppositories.
- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- If you have diabetes, keep good control of your blood sugar level. Tell your nurse or your doctor if your glucose levels are higher or lower than normal.



- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To decrease infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- Sugar-free hard candies and chewing gum can keep your mouth moist.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.

Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of olanzapine with food, however, you should avoid alcohol while taking olanzapine.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about all other prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) you are taking before starting this medicine as there are known drug interactions with olanzapine. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Confusion or agitation
- Fast heartbeat
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Headache that does not go away
- Difficulty eating/swallowing
- Sore mouth/throat
- Extreme tiredness or feeling sleepy
- Muscle stiffness
- Fever with rash or swelling
- Unusual and/or involuntary movements such as lip smacking, grimacing and/or eye blinking
- No bowel movement in 3 days or when you feel uncomfortable
- Nausea that is not relieved by this medicine
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Abnormal blood sugar
- Unusual thirst, passing urine often, headache, sweating, shakiness, irritability



- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week
- Symptoms of a seizure such as confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**
- If you think you may be pregnant

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** It is not known if this drug may harm an unborn child. For this reason, be sure to talk with your doctor if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant while receiving this drug. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In women, this drug may cause increase in prolactin levels which may affect your ability to have children while you are receiving this drug. These effects are usually reversible. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children.

Revised January 2021

