Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Ziprasidone

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it’s used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: US

Geodon

## Brand Names: Canada

Auro-Ziprasidone; Zeldox

### Warning

- There is a higher chance of death in older adults who take this drug for mental problems caused by dementia. Most of the deaths were linked to heart disease or infection. This drug is not approved to treat mental problems caused by dementia.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat schizophrenia.
- It is used to treat bipolar disorder.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have ever had a long QT on ECG or other heartbeat that is not normal.
- If you have any of these health problems: Heart failure (weak heart) or a recent heart attack.
- If you have any of these health problems: Low potassium or magnesium levels.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Amiodarone, arsenic, chlorpromazine, disopyramide, dofetilide, dolasetron, dronedarone, droperidol, gatifloxacin, halofantrine, ibutilide, levomethadyl, mefloquine, mesoridazine, moxifloxacin, pentamidine, pimozide, probucol, procainamide, quinidine, sotalol, sparfloxacin, tacrolimus, or thioridazine.

- If you are taking any drugs that can cause a certain type of heartbeat that is not normal (prolonged QT interval). There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

**What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?**

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.

- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- High blood sugar or diabetes, high cholesterol, and weight gain have happened with drugs like this one. These may raise the chance of heart and brain blood vessel disease.
- Check your blood sugar as you have been told by your doctor.
- Be careful in hot weather or while being active. Drink lots of fluids to stop fluid loss.
- Dizziness, sleepiness, and feeling less stable may happen with this drug. These may lead to falling, which can cause broken bones or other health problems.
- Low white blood cell counts have happened with drugs like this one. This may lead to a higher chance of infection. Rarely, infections have been deadly. Tell your doctor if you have ever had a low white blood cell count. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat.
- Some people may get a severe muscle problem called tardive dyskinesia. This problem may lessen or go away after stopping this drug, but it may not go away. The risk is greater with diabetes and in older adults,

especially older females. The risk is greater with longer use or higher doses, but it may also occur after short-term use with low doses. Call your doctor right away if you have trouble controlling body movements or problems with your tongue, face, mouth, or jaw like tongue sticking out, puffing cheeks, mouth puckering, or chewing.

- Call your doctor right away if you have a painful erection (hard penis) or an erection that lasts for longer than 4 hours. This may happen even when you are not having sex. If this is not treated right away, it may lead to lasting sex problems and you may not be able to have sex.
- An unsafe heartbeat that is not normal (long QT on ECG) has happened with this drug. This may raise the chance of sudden death. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Older adults with dementia taking drugs like this one have had a higher number of strokes. Sometimes these have been deadly. This drug is not approved to treat mental problems caused by dementia.
- This drug may affect being able to get pregnant. This effect goes back to normal when the drug is stopped. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.
- Taking this drug in the third trimester of pregnancy may lead to side effects or withdrawal in the newborn.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Mental, mood, or behavior changes that are new or

worse.

- Thoughts of hurting yourself or suicide.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat.
- Trouble controlling body movements, twitching, change in balance, trouble swallowing or speaking.
- Seizures.
- Change in eyesight.
- Enlarged breasts, nipple discharge, not able to get or keep an erection, or menstrual changes.
- Severe skin reactions may happen with this drug. This includes Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS). Sometimes, body organs may also be affected. These reactions can be deadly. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; red or irritated eyes; sores in your mouth, throat, nose, eyes, genitals, or any areas of skin; fever; chills; body aches; shortness of breath; or swollen glands.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly health problem called neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) may happen. Call your doctor right away if you have any fever, muscle cramps or stiffness, dizziness, very bad headache, confusion, change in thinking, fast

heartbeat, heartbeat that does not feel normal, or are sweating a lot.

**What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

**All products:**

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Restlessness.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Anxiety.
- Diarrhea or constipation.
- Dry mouth.
- Headache.
- Cough.
- Runny nose.
- Weight gain.

**Injection:**

- Irritation where this drug is given.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

**How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

**Capsules:**

- It may take a few weeks to see the full effect.
- Take this drug with food.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, open, or crush.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

**Injection:**

- It is given as a shot into a muscle.

**All products:**

- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you use marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.

**What do I do if I miss a dose?**
**Capsules:**

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, with food.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

**Injection:**

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

## How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

### Capsules:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

### Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

### All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug,

please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

**Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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