

Amantadine

Amantadine is a medication with multiple psychiatric benefits that has been used since the 1960's. It was originally developed to treat the flu (but the virus developed resistance to it).

In the brain, amantadine works through glutamate (like ketamine) and dopamine (which is involved in motivation and drive). It improves depression, concentration, OCD, irritability (in autism, ADHD, or after traumatic brain injury), weight loss (3-9 lbs on average), sexual dysfunction, and unwanted muscle movements (dyskinesias). It is slightly energizing.

Medically, amantadine is used in Parkinson's disease and to treat fatigue in disorders like long-COVID and multiple sclerosis. The main limitation is that it is not FDA approved in psychiatry and most of its potential benefits are based on small studies.

How to Take It

- Take in the morning. If taking more than 100 mg, take one in morning and one at lunch.
- Amantadine can be taken with or without food, morning or night.
- If you miss a dose... ask yourself if you are closer to the dose you missed – if so, take the missed dose and continue on your regular schedule. If you are closer to the next scheduled dose, wait and take that one. Do not double-up on doses.

Side Effects & Warnings

Amantadine can cause dizziness, poor coordination, trouble concentrating (caution when operating a vehicle), dry mouth, headache, nausea, nightmares, insomnia.

Rare: Confusion, seizures, hallucinations, edema, purplish spots on legs (these go away when the medicine is stopped). Use with

caution if you have congestive heart failure, renal failure, or seizures.

Rarely, it can cause compulsive gambling or overspending.

Interactions

Amantadine leaves the body through the kidney (not the liver) so has few drug interactions. It may increase the side effects of: Betel Nut, Bromperidol, Bupropion (Wellbutrin), Triamterene. There may be other drug interactions; check with your pharmacist and let your doctors know you are taking amantadine.

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 7/5/2025