

Cariprazine

Cariprazine (Vraylar) can help depression, anxiety, agitation, paranoia, and hallucinations. It belongs to a class of medications called the atypical antipsychotics, which differ widely in their side effects and benefits. These medications can be difficult to tolerate, but cariprazine is one of the better tolerated in the group.

Cariprazine treats bipolar mania and mixed states, which cause irritability, agitation, anxiety, insomnia, racing thoughts, distraction and impulsivity.

Cariprazine can take up to 2-3 weeks to work fully but can bring benefits after a few days.

How should I take it?

Cariprazine can be taken once a day with or without food. Cariprazine's benefits build up gradually in the brain and are not impacted by the time of day you take it. Most people prefer to take it at night as it can cause drowsiness.

Link the time you take cariprazine with a daily routine that you already have in place, such as showering or brushing your teeth. Store the medicine near that routine and take it at the same time so you can build on habits you've already developed.

What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

How long do I need to take it?

This depends on your diagnosis and which other medications you are taking. Most people with bipolar disorder need to stay on at least

one mood stabilizer for the long term in order to prevent mood swings. If cariprazine helped, it is best to stay on it for at least 6 months before considering going off it. That gives the brain time to build up habits of stability.

What happens if I stop it?

Key Points

1. Cariprazine can be taken morning or night (take at night if it causes drowsiness)
2. The most common side effect is restlessness, which is treatable or can be managed by lowering the dose.
3. There are several rare, but serious, side effects with cariprazine (diabetes, high cholesterol, tardive dyskinesia, compulsive gambling or spending).
4. Lower those risks by checking weight before and after starting it and using the app tdscreen.ai (see inside)

Cariprazine is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms. If you plan to come off cariprazine, it is best to do so slowly (over at least 2 weeks) as that will lower the chance of sudden mood swings returning.

Checking labs

It is a good idea to check for diabetes and high cholesterol while taking cariprazine. This medication, as well as bipolar disorder itself, increases the risk of these conditions.

Side effects

The most common side effects were restlessness, muscle stiffness, tremor, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, headache, constipation and stomach upset.

If you don't tolerate the medication, try cutting your dose in half until the side effects get better and then raising it up.

These side effects tend to improve with time or by lowering the dose:

Tiredness, restlessness, muscle aches or stiffness.

Preventing weight gain

We can prevent weight gain on this med if we know that you're at risk. Here's how to tell. Weigh yourself carefully before starting it and again one month later (use the same scale, check in morning, naked, before eating and after going to the bathroom).

If you gain weight in the first month, there are several options to prevent the problem. As a first step, here is a nutrition plan that improves mood, causes weight loss, and has no calorie counting:

www.chrisaikenmd.com/antidepressantdiet

Medical risks

Compulsive gambling: Rarely, cariprazine increases the urge to gamble or spend money.

Low blood pressure: cariprazine can cause blood pressure to drop when you stand up (leading to dizziness or falls). You can reduce this risk by standing up slowly.

Elevations of prolactin hormone: this is very rare and can cause menstrual irregularities and breast milk secretion. We may need to stop cariprazine or use treatments to lower prolactin if this occurs.

Metabolic Changes: Cariprazine can increase the risk of diabetes and high cholesterol

Tardive Dyskinesia: With long term use, this med may cause involuntary movements, such as twitching in the face, hands, or other muscles. This condition can be treated but sometimes it is not reversible. We will check for movements while you are on it, and you can prevent it further by using the tdcheck.ai app every few

months. It detects early signs of the problem better than doctors.

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome: This syndrome, which is extremely rare on

Akathisia

This side effect is a feeling of inner restlessness that makes it very uncomfortable to sit still. It is not dangerous and may improve with time or a lower dose.

Akathisia can be relieved with several medications including propranolol, vitamin B6, betaxolol, pramipexole, gabapentin, trazodone, and mirtazapine.

cariprazine, consists of sudden, severe muscle stiffness, fever and irregular pulse and blood pressure.

Use in Dementia: Medications similar to cariprazine can increase the risk of death when used in older adults with dementia. This effect is not seen in people without dementia and may be related to brain-changes that dementia brings.

Pregnancy: Cariprazine has not been adequately studied in pregnancy. It does pass through breast milk.

Interactions

Recreational drugs: Alcohol (in excess of 2 glasses/day) and recreational drugs can prevent cariprazine from working.

Other medications: These web sites help you check for drug interactions. You should talk with us about the information you find as many drug interactions have only a mild effect:

reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker

How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag with water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds) and throw in the garbage.

Cost and insurance coverage

Cariprazine only available in brand form. There may be coupons at www.vyralar.com. If you are paying out of pocket, you will find the lowest cost at www.GoodRx.com.

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/26/2025

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Brand	Vraylar
Dose range	1.5-6mg/day (has been used up to 12mg/day)
Sizes	Caps: 1.5, 3, 4.5, 6mg
Release date	9/17/2015
FDA-approval	Bipolar mania and mixed states, schizophrenia