

# Quetiapine

Quetiapine (Seroquel) treats depression, anxiety, insomnia, agitation, paranoia and hallucinations. It belongs to a class of medications called the atypical antipsychotics, which differ widely in their side effects and benefits. Among these medications, quetiapine is one of the strongest for depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. It also improves sleep quality.

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

## How should I take it?

Quetiapine is available as an extended release XR form and an instant release (IR) form. Take the IR right before bed, with or without food. Take the XR 12 hours before you plan to awake. You will likely feel groggy about 4 hours after taking it. Take the XR on an empty stomach (1 hour before or after eating), otherwise it will break down too quickly and cause sudden grogginess.

Quetiapine can make you dizzy when standing, so be careful and stand up slowly when you first start it to avoid falling.

## 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 quetiapine 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?

Quetiapine is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms. If you plan to come off quetiapine, 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

### Key Points

1. Take quetiapine at night. It causes drowsiness.
3. There are several rare, but serious, side effects with quetiapine (diabetes, high cholesterol, tardive dyskinesia).
3. Lower those risks by checking weight before and after starting it and using the app [tdscreen.ai](#) (see inside)
4. If you take the XR, take it on an empty stomach (not within 1 hour of eating) and 12 hours before you plan to awake.

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

## Managing drowsiness

When you first start quetiapine, you may feel extremely groggy after your dose and even into the next day. This feeling usually improves and may go away entirely over the first two weeks. Paradoxically, there is usually less grogginess as you increase the dose, because quetiapine goes to different receptors in the brain at higher doses:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 25-100 mg:  | Treats anxiety and insomnia                          |
| 150-300 mg: | Treats anxiety and non-bipolar depression            |
| 300 mg:     | Treats bipolar depression                            |
| 400-800 mg: | Treats bipolar mania, mixed states and schizophrenia |

## Side effects

Weight gain and drowsiness are the most common side effects with quetiapine.

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:*

Restlessness, muscle aches or stiffness, nasal congestion.

As you are starting the medicine, use caution when driving or performing tasks that require alertness. This should not be a problem once you have adjusted to the medicine and know how it affects you.

## Preventing weight gain

Quetiapine causes weight gain by making food more rewarding and altering metabolism. Not everyone gains weight on the medicine. 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).

It is easier to control your environment than your instincts, so start with that by removing snack foods and sweets from your kitchen. Another simple technique is to increase your intake of protein – that will stabilize your appetite throughout the day. Eating a high-protein breakfast, within half an hour of awakening, is particularly important. Finally, have a high-protein snack, such as nuts or a protein bar, between meals. This will “spoil your appetite” so you'll be less likely to overeat during the meal.

Here is a nutrition plan that improves mood, causes weight loss, and has no calorie counting:

[www.chrisaikenmd.com/antidepressantdiet](http://www.chrisaikenmd.com/antidepressantdiet)

## Medical Risks

*Low blood pressure:* quetiapine can cause blood

## 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.

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 can cause menstrual irregularities and breast milk secretion. We may need to stop quetiapine or use treatments to lower prolactin if this occurs.

*Metabolic Changes:* Quetiapine 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 quetiapine, consists of sudden, severe muscle stiffness, fever and irregular pulse and blood pressure.

*Use in Dementia:* Quetiapine 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:* Quetiapine has not been adequately studied in pregnancy. It does pass through breast milk.

### Interactions

*Sugary and Fatty Foods:* Quetiapine interacts with these foods to make them more rewarding to the brain and more inflammatory in the stomach, leading to weight gain and potentially diabetes. Remove sugary / fatty foods from your environment while taking quetiapine.

*Recreational drugs:* Alcohol (in excess of 2 glasses/day) and recreational drugs can prevent quetiapine 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](http://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

Quetiapine is available in generic. If you are paying out of pocket, you will find the lowest cost at [www.GoodRx.com](http://www.GoodRx.com).

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/26/2025

### Quetiapine

Brand	Seroquel
Dose range	50-800mg/day
Sizes	Tab: 25, 50, 100, 200, 300, 400mg XR Tab*: 50, 150, 200, 300, 400mg  *breaking the XR tabs will destroy the extended release mechanism and cause them to release instantly.
Release date	9/26/1997
FDA-approval	Depression and bipolar depression, bipolar mania and mixed-states, schizophrenia