

# Memantine (Namenda)

Memantine is medication that is FDA approved in Alzheimer's dementia, where it slows the memory and behavioral problems of the illness.

Its mechanism resemble that of the antidepressant ketamine, and it has been used successfully for depression, bipolar disorder, OCD, autism, and alcohol use disorder. These psychiatric uses are off-label and the research supporting them is much smaller than that for dementia.

## How it works

Memantine blocks the effects of glutamate in the brain on NMDA receptors, similar to other medications like ketamine, esketamine, dextromethorphan (Auvelity), and amantadine. Too much glutamate has toxic effects in the brain.

## How should I take it?

The extended release (XR) version is taken once a day, while the instant release is taken once or twice a day depending on the dose and how you tolerate it. It can be taken morning or night (if it makes you tired, take at night).

## 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.

## How long do I need to take it?

How long you take memantine will depend on the reason you started it.

## What happens if I stop it?

Memantine is not addictive and does not cause significant withdrawal symptoms, but is still best to taper down gradually.

## Side effects

Outside of sedation, memantine is generally well tolerated and does not cause concentration problems or sexual side effects.

The most common side effects of memantine are dizziness, headache, constipation, and sedation. Rarely, it can cause muscle tension.

*Pregnancy and breastfeeding:* Memantine has not been adequately evaluated during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

## Risks

Very rarely, memantine can cause confusion, or hallucinations.

## Interactions

Significant drug interactions with memantine are rare. The web sites below help you check for drug interactions. 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 a little water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds or kitty litter) and throw in the trash.

### Cost and insurance coverage

Memantine is available generic. If you are paying out-of-pocket, the lowest cost is usually found at GoodRx.com.

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 8/1/2025

### Memantine

Brands	Namenda
Dose range	300-600 mg/day
Sizes	XR: 7, 14, 21, 28 mg Instant release: 5, 10 mg
Release date	10/6/2003
FDA-approval	Moderate to severe dementia of the Alzheimer's type.

Memantine XR is also available a combination pill with the dementia medication donepezil. It is branded as Namzaric and comes as 14/10mg and 28/10mg (the 10 mg is donepezil).