

Zonisamide

Zonisamide is seizure medication that has benefits in psychiatry, where it reduces alcohol use, binge eating, and weight gain from psychiatric medications (people lost an average of 20 pounds over 8 months). It may also reduce tardive dyskinesia, a side effect of antipsychotics.

How it works

Zonisamide modulates three neurotransmitters involved in psychiatric disorders: glutamate, GABA, and sodium channels. It also protects brain cells, particularly the dopamine cells that are involved in mood and movement.

How should I take it?

Zonisamide is dosed once or twice a day, with or without food. If taking once a day, you can take it at 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 zonisamide will depend on the reason you started it.

What happens if I stop it?

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

Side effects

The most common side-effects are feeling dizzy or sleepy, and lack of appetite.

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

Risks

Very rarely, zonisamide can cause a serious allergic rash (Stevens Johnson Syndrome) that can be life threatening if it goes on too long. Stop zonisamide if you get any kind of rash within the first three months of starting it. The rash is more common in people with a sulfa allergy (sulfonamide medications).

Key Points

- 1. Stop zonisamide and call us if you get any kind of rash within the first 3 months of starting it.*
- 2. Stay hydrated to prevent overheating on it.*

Another rare side effect is temperature imbalance, which can cause heat stroke and is more common in children. Stay hydrated while on this medication.

Zonisamide can affect coordination and concentration (caution when operating a vehicle).

Interactions

Zonisamide levels are affected by medications that alter the CYP3A4 enzyme. 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

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

Zonisamide 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

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Brands	Zonegran
Dose range	100-500 mg/day
Sizes	Caps: 25, 100 mg
Release date	2000
FDA-approval	Epilepsy