



## Using *Risperidone* in Children and Adolescents

This information explains how *risperidone* can be used as part of a treatment plan with children and adolescents. You may wish to share this information with your family members to help them to understand your treatment options. Since every person's needs are different, it is important that you follow the advice provided to you by your own doctor, nurse and/or pharmacist and speak to them if you have any questions about this medication.



### Overview

Risperidone (Risperdal®) belongs to a group of medications called “atypical antipsychotics”.

### What is risperidone used for?

Though it is called an “antipsychotic”, risperidone can be used to treat several conditions such as:

- Schizophrenia and other thought disorders.
- Bipolar Disorder.
- Tic disorders like Tourette's Syndrome.
- Disorders like Autism and Asperger's Syndrome.
- Disruptive Behaviour Disorders (like Conduct Disorder or complex forms of ADHD) – usually at low doses).

Risperidone may also be used to treat other disorders such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (also called OCD) and some types of depression. Your doctor may be prescribing risperidone for another reason. If you are unclear why risperidone is being prescribed, please ask your doctor.



### How does risperidone work?

Risperidone adjusts the functioning of certain chemicals in the brain called dopamine and serotonin. It is believed that some chemicals, like dopamine, are imbalanced in people who have disorders like schizophrenia. The exact way that antipsychotics improve the symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder is not fully known.

### How should risperidone be taken?

Risperidone is available in several forms such as:

- tablets (regular or ones that dissolve in your mouth called ‘M-Tabs’)
- liquid
- long-acting injection (called ‘Risperdal Consta®’).

The tablets and liquid are usually taken once or twice a day with or without food. Risperidone should be taken at the same time each day as directed by your doctor. Try to connect it with something you do each day (like eating breakfast or brushing your teeth) so that you don't forget.

If you are using the liquid form of Risperidone, you can mix it with water, orange juice, coffee or low-fat milk. Do not take the solution with tea or cola.

If your doctor has prescribed the injection, it is usually given every 2 weeks by a nurse.

If you are taking the dissolving tablets (M-Tabs), follow these directions. Since this medication will be prescribed in a “blister pack” (not a bottle), you have to be careful about getting the medication out.

1. Use dry hands to peel off the foil from the back of the blister before removing the tablet (wet hands can cause the medication to melt in your hands). Do not push the thin wafer through the foil.
2. Place the tablet on your tongue. The tablet will dissolve quickly and may be swallowed with or without water. Try not to chew it.

Usually, your doctor will start with a low dose of risperidone and gradually increase this dose over several days or weeks based on how you respond to it. You and your doctor can then discuss the best dosage to stay on based on how this medication is tolerated (how well the medicine is working and how you are doing with side effects of the medicine) and how well it helps decrease your symptoms.

### **When will this medication start working?**

This depends on what you are using it for. When treating the symptoms of schizophrenia (such as hallucinations or delusions), it usually takes 3 - 6 weeks or longer before the benefits of risperidone are noticeable. When risperidone is working well for those with schizophrenia, some people notice that their thoughts are clearer and more organized. Agitation may be decreased, and hallucinations (for example, hearing voices or seeing things no one else sees) may stop completely or be much less. Your mood may be more settled, and you may see a reduction of intense fears and worries. You should continue taking risperidone regularly, even if you are feeling well as it can prevent symptoms from reoccurring. If you are taking this medication to help with symptoms of "mania", you may notice some changes in the first week or two.

Risperidone does not work in everyone. If you are not feeling better within 6 weeks, your doctor may recommend you try a different medication.



### **How long do I have to take risperidone?**

This depends on the symptoms you have, how frequent they occur and how long you have had them. Most people need to take risperidone for several months. This allows time for your symptoms to stabilize and for you to regain your functioning. Your doctor will discuss with you the benefits and risks to taking risperidone. At this time, you can also discuss how long you might need to take this medication.

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Do not stop taking risperidone without discussing it with your doctor. If you stop taking risperidone suddenly, it is possible that your symptoms can return.

### **Is risperidone addictive?**

No, risperidone is not addictive and you will not have "cravings" for this medication like you might with nicotine or street drugs. If you and your doctor decide it is best to stop, your doctor will explain how to safely come off this medication so you don't feel negative effects as your body adjusts to being without it.

### **What are the side effects of risperidone and what should I do if I get them?**

As with most medications, side effects may occur in those who take risperidone. Most side effects are mild and temporary. Side effects may occur before any of the beneficial effects. It is also possible to experience a side effect that you feel is serious or long lasting. If this occurs, speak to your doctor about ways to manage the side effects at your next appointment. Here are some of the more common side effects of taking this medicine. In brackets are suggested ways to lessen these effects.

#### **Common side effects**

Should any of these side effects be too troublesome for you, please discuss them with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

- Agitation and feelings of restlessness (*avoid caffeine, from colas and coffee*)
- Constipation (*increase exercise, fluids, fruits and fibre*)
- Dizziness (*try getting up slowly from a sitting or lying down position*)
- Drowsiness (*try taking the dose at bedtime*)
- Headache (*try using a pain reliever like acetaminophen (Tylenol®)*)
- Increase in hunger (*avoid high calorie foods*)

- Stomach ache (*try taking the medication with food*)
- Muscle spasms or stiff muscles (*there is a medication to relieve this, talk to your doctor*)
- Weight gain (*monitor your food intake, increase your exercise*)

**Uncommon side effects** (e.g., those that occur in less than 5% of patients)

Contact your doctor IMMEDIATELY if you have any of these side effects:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Breast tenderness
- High blood sugar
- High blood lipid levels
- Fever
- Confusion
- Fast and irregular heart beat



On rare occasions in older individuals, risperidone has also been associated with a side effect called “tardive dyskinesia”. This is a permanent adverse effect that can occur in patients who take antipsychotics for several years. It involves involuntary movements of some muscles in the body like the lips, tongue, hands and neck. Withdrawing the antipsychotic early (at the first signs of it occurring) or switching to another “atypical antipsychotic” decreases the chances of having this side effect continue.

**What precautions should my doctor and I be aware of when taking risperidone?**

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you:

- have any allergies or have had bad reactions to other medications.
- are (or start) taking any other prescription or non-prescription medications. Many medications can interact with risperidone, such as carbamazepine, heart medications, antidepressants, antibiotics, stomach medications and several others. Your doctor may need to change the doses of your medication(s) or monitor you carefully for side effects if you are taking medications that interact with risperidone.
- have a history of heart disease, kidney or liver disease, a bowel obstruction, diabetes (or a family history of diabetes) or glaucoma.
- are pregnant (or are planning to become pregnant) or are breast-feeding. Tell your doctor if you become pregnant while taking risperidone.
- are currently using alcohol or street drugs as these substances can decrease how well risperidone works for you and/or make you feel drowsy.



**Tip:** When taking this medication, your body may have difficulty regulating your temperature. You need to drink lots of fluids and water to avoid becoming dehydrated. You should avoid doing lots of physical activities on hot days.

**Tip:** Risperidone can make some individuals feel drowsy, dizzy or slowed down. If you experience these temporary side effects, it is important to avoid operating heavy machinery or driving a car.



## What special instructions should I follow while using risperidone?

- Keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory. Your doctor may order certain lab tests (like glucose or prolactin levels, or liver tests) to check how you are responding to risperidone.
- Do not allow anyone else to use your medication.
- Try to keep a healthy and well balanced diet. Some individuals taking risperidone gain weight due to an increase in appetite.
- If you experience any abnormal movements in your arms body or face, tell your doctor as soon a possible.

Tip: Use the Antipsychotic Monitoring Form for Children and Adolescents to help measure your progress on this medication

## What should I do if I forget to take a dose?

If you take risperidone only at bedtime and you forget to take it, skip the missed dose and continue with your schedule the next day. Do NOT double your next dose. If you take it more than once a day, take the missed dose as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose (e.g., within 4 hours), do not take the missed dose or double up on next dose. Instead, continue your regular dosing schedule.



## What storage conditions are needed for risperidone?

- Keep this medication in the original container, stored at room temperature away from moisture and heat (e.g., not in the bathroom).
- Store dissolving tablets in the original sealed packaging and use immediately once opened.
- Keep this medication out of reach from children.