

SYMMETREL®

100 mg Capsules

Amantadine Hydrochloride

What is in this leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about Symmetrel.

It does not contain all the available information. It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist. The information in this leaflet was last updated on the date listed on the final page. Some more recent information on the medicine may be available.

You should ensure that you speak to your pharmacist or doctor to obtain the most up to date information on the medicine. You can also download the most up to date leaflet from www.medsafe.govt.nz.

Those updates may contain important information about the medicine and its use of which you should be aware. All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking this medicine against the benefits they expect it will have for you.

If you have any concerns about taking this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Keep this leaflet with the medicine.

You may need to read it again.

What Symmetrel is used for

Symmetrel capsule has two very different uses.

1. It is used to treat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's disease is caused by a disturbance in the balance of two substances, dopamine and acetylcholine, that the brain uses to send signals to other parts of the body. Symmetrel helps to fix the imbalance of too little dopamine and/or too much acetylcholine; and to relieve the symptoms, such as shaking of the limbs, stiffness and slowness of movement which make it difficult to perform usual tasks. Symmetrel can be used alone or with other medicines to treat this condition.

2. It is used to prevent a type of influenza ("the flu") caused by Type A influenza virus.

Symmetrel is usually used for people who could become very ill if they get the flu infections (for example, people who have a serious illness such as lung disease or diabetes). Usually these people will have been vaccinated (had a flu shot). But if, for some reason, they have not been vaccinated, Symmetrel can be given. Symmetrel is only used to prevent Type A influenza. It will not help once you have the flu. This medicine cannot prevent colds or other types of flu not caused by Type A virus, or other viral infections.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why this medicine has been prescribed for you.

Your doctor may have prescribed it for another purpose.

Symmetrel is not recommended for children under 5 years of age as there is not enough information on its use in that age group.

Symmetrel is only available with a doctor's prescription. It is not habit-forming.

Before you take Symmetrel

When you must not take it

Do not take Symmetrel if you have ever had an allergy to:

- amantadine hydrochloride (the active ingredient in Symmetrel) or
- to any of the other ingredients listed at the end of this leaflet

Some of the symptoms of an allergic reaction may include: shortness of breath, wheezing or difficulty breathing; swelling of the face, lips, tongue or other parts of the body; rash, itching or hives on the skin.

Do not take Symmetrel if you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant.

It may affect your unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.

Do not take Symmetrel after the expiry date printed on the pack.

If you take it after the expiry date has passed, it may not work as well as it should.

Do not take Symmetrel if the packaging is torn or shows signs of tampering.

In that case, return it to your pharmacist.

If you are not sure whether you should start taking Symmetrel, talk to your doctor.

Before you start to take it

Tell your doctor if you now have, or have ever had, any of the following health problems or medical conditions:

- kidney disease
- liver disease
- seizures (fits)
- a mental disorder
- heart disease
- circulation problems
- stomach ulcers
- low blood pressure
- increased pressure in the eyes (glaucoma)
- prostate trouble
- recurring skin problems (eczema)

Your doctor may want to take special precautions if you have any of the above conditions.

Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding.

The active ingredient in Symmetrel passes into the breast milk and could affect your baby. Your doctor can discuss with you the risks and benefits of breast-feeding while you are taking this medicine.

Tell your doctor if you are allergic to any other medicines, foods, dyes or preservatives.

Your doctor will want to know if you are prone to allergies.

Ask your doctor for advice if you think that you may be allergic, if you have ever had any unusual sensitivity, rash or other possible signs of allergy.

If you have not told your doctor about any of these things, tell him/her before you start taking Symmetrel.

Taking other medicines

Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines, including medicines that you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.

Some medicines and Symmetrel may interfere with each other. These include:

- other medicines for Parkinson's disease
- medicines for depression or other mental disorders
- other medicines that affect the nervous system (e.g. medicines to help you sleep or calm you down, pain relievers, alcohol)
- medicines for abdominal or stomach cramps or spasms
- some combination diuretics (water or fluid pills) used to treat high blood pressure (hydrochlorothiazide and triamterene)

Other medicines may be affected by Symmetrel or they may affect how well it works. You may need to take different amounts of your medicines or you may need to take different medicines.

Your doctor and pharmacist have more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while you are taking Symmetrel.

How to take Symmetrel

Follow all directions given to you by your doctor and pharmacist carefully.

These instructions may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

If you do not understand the instructions on the label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.

How much to take

- For Parkinson's disease:

Adults up to 65 years old: treatment is usually started with one capsule each day. If your symptoms do not improve after a week, your doctor may increase the dose to one capsule twice a day. Other medicines for Parkinson's disease may also be needed to help control your symptoms.

Adults over 65 years old: one capsule each day.

- For Type A influenza:

Children and adults aged 10 to 65 years: the usual dose is one capsule twice a day. If you have side effects from the medicine, the dose can be reduced to one capsule each day.

Children aged 5 to 9 and adults over 65 years old: one capsule each day.

- For people with reduced kidney function:

Symmetrel is removed from your body through your kidneys into the urine. If your kidneys do not work as well as usual, due to increasing age or kidney disease, this medicine may stay in your body longer than usual. Your doctor may reduce your dose to one capsule every 2 to 7 days to keep the medicine from building up in your body and help prevent side effects.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure of the correct dose.

They will tell you exactly how much to take. For people who are elderly or have reduced kidney function, the dose may need to be reduced.

Do not change the dose yourself, without your doctor's advice, regardless of how well you may feel.

How to take it

Swallow the capsule with a full glass of water. Do not chew, break, or crush the capsule.

If your stomach is upset after taking the capsule, take it with a meal or after a snack.

When to take it

Try to take the capsules at about the same times each day, as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.

Taking your medicine at the same times each day will have the best effect. It will also help you remember when to take your capsules.

How long to take it

- For Parkinson's disease:

You may have to take Symmetrel for a long time to control your symptoms.

Do not stop taking Symmetrel or lower the dose without first checking with your doctor. Do not let yourself run out of medicine over the weekend or on holidays.

Stopping your medicine may make your condition worse or cause severe side effects. If it is necessary to stop your medicine, your doctor will gradually reduce the amount you take each day before stopping it completely. Some people find that this medicine loses some of its effect after several weeks. In this case, your doctor may gradually reduce the dose and stop it for a few weeks. Then it can be started again to see if the benefit can be regained.

- For influenza caused by Type A virus:

You will start taking Symmetrel as soon as possible after you have been exposed to the flu and keep taking it for at least 10 days. Sometimes it may be necessary to keep taking it until the outbreak of influenza is over.

If you forget to take it

If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next one when you are meant to.

Otherwise, take the dose as soon as you remember, and then go back to taking it as you would normally.

Do not take a double dose to make up for the one that you missed.

This may increase the chance of you getting an unwanted side effect.

If you have trouble remembering when to take your medicine, ask your pharmacist for some hints.

If you take too much (overdose)

Immediately telephone your doctor or the National Poisons and Hazardous Chemicals Information Centre (telephone 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766), or go to the Accident and Emergency Department at your nearest hospital if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much Symmetrel. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning. Keep the telephone numbers for these places handy.

Symptoms of too much Symmetrel may include restlessness, confusion or disorientation, stiffness or unusual muscle movements, seizures (fits), vomiting, difficulty breathing, fast or irregular heartbeat.

While you are taking Symmetrel

Things you must do

Continue taking Symmetrel as your doctor tells you.

Talk to your doctor or your pharmacist if you have questions about how long to take Symmetrel.

Women of child-bearing potential should use an efficient contraceptive method during treatment and for 5 days after taking their last dose of Symmetrel. If you become pregnant while taking Symmetrel, tell your doctor immediately.

This medicine should not be taken while you are pregnant.

When you are outdoors, wear protective clothing and use at least a 15+ sunscreen. Do not use a sunlamp or tanning bed or booth.

Symmetrel may cause your skin to be much more sensitive to sunlight than it normally is. Exposure to sunlight may cause a skin rash, itching, redness or severe sunburn.

If your skin does appear to be burning, tell your doctor.

If you develop blurred vision or other visual problems, tell your doctor straight away.

Your doctor can refer you to an ophthalmologist who will evaluate and may advise to stop your treatment with Symmetrel.

Tell your doctor if you or your family/carer notices that you are developing urges or cravings to behave in ways that are unusual for you and you cannot resist the impulse, drive or temptation to carry out certain activities that could harm yourself or others.

These are called impulse control disorders and can include behaviours such as addictive gambling, excessive eating or spending, an abnormally high sex drive or an increase in sexual thoughts or feelings. **Your doctor may need to adjust or stop your dose of Symmetrel.**

Be sure to keep all of your doctor's appointments so that your progress can be checked.

This will help your doctor provide the best treatment for you.

If you are about to be started on any new medicine, remind your doctor and pharmacist that you are taking Symmetrel.

Before having any surgery or emergency treatment, tell the doctor or dentist in charge that you are taking Symmetrel.

Tell any other doctor, dentist or pharmacist who treats you that you are taking Symmetrel.

Things you must not do

Do not exceed the recommended dosage.

Do not give this medicine to anyone else, even if their condition seems similar to yours.

Do not use Symmetrel to treat any other complaints unless your doctor tells you to.

Do not give this medicine to anyone else, even if their symptoms seem similar to yours or they have the same condition as you.

Things to be careful of

Be careful driving, operating machinery, using tools, or doing jobs that require you to be alert while you are taking Symmetrel until you know how it affects you. Children should avoid doing things like riding bicycles or climbing trees.

This medicine may cause dizziness, lightheadedness, confusion, difficulty concentrating, impair your reaction, or cause blurred vision in some people.

If this medicine makes you feel dizzy or lightheaded, be careful when getting up from a sitting or lying position

Symmetrel may lower your blood pressure, especially at the start of treatment. These symptoms can usually be prevented by getting up slowly and flexing leg muscles and toes to get the blood flowing. When getting out of bed, dangle your legs over the side for a minute or two before standing up.

Be careful when drinking alcohol while you are taking Symmetrel.

The combination could make you more dizzy or lightheaded than usual.

Side effects

Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking Symmetrel.

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. You may need medical treatment if you get some of the side effects.

If you are over 65 years old, you should be especially careful while taking this medicine. Report any side effects promptly to your doctor.

As people grow older, they are more likely to get side effects from medicines. Symmetrel can cause confusion or disorientation, especially in older people. Your family or carer should be aware of this. Special care may be needed.

Do not be alarmed by this list of possible side effects. You may not experience any of them.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to answer any questions you may have.

Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following side effects and they worry you:

- strong impulse to gamble excessively
- increased sexual drive or interest
- uncontrollable excessive shopping or spending
- binge eating or compulsive eating
- dizziness or lightheadedness, especially when you get up too quickly from a sitting or lying position.
- purplish-red blotchy spots on the skin, especially of the legs or feet and sometimes in a fish-net pattern. This may happen after taking Symmetrel for a few months. The blotches usually go away gradually within a few weeks after stopping the medicine.
- symptoms of sunburn (such as redness, itching, swelling or blistering of the skin) that happen more quickly than normal
- blurred vision
- dry mouth
- swelling of feet or lower legs due to fluid buildup
- feeling of fast or irregular heartbeat
- indigestion, loss of appetite, nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting
- constipation or diarrhoea
- tiredness or listlessness
- difficulty concentrating
- nervousness, anxiety, or depression
- disturbed sleep or nightmares
- weakness, shakiness or trembling
- excessive sweating
- headache
- hair loss

Tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if you notice any of the following:

- signs of allergy such as rash, itching or hives on the skin; swelling of the face, lips, tongue or other part of the body; shortness of breath, wheezing, accelerated or troubled breathing
- stiff, rigid muscles accompanied by a sudden increase in body temperature, sweating, fast heartbeat and feeling disoriented
- constant "flu-like" symptoms such as chills, fever, sore throat, aching joints, sores in mouth, swollen glands
- swelling of feet or lower legs due to fluid buildup
- fast or irregular heartbeat
- loss of control over movements or other movement disorders
- fainting spells or seizures (fits)
- difficulty in speaking or slurred speech
- unusually high energy or level of activity (mania)
- confusion, disorientation or hallucinations (seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not there)
- sudden loss of vision or trouble focussing your eyes properly
- difficulty urinating (passing water) or inability to hold your urine (incontinence)
- yellow colour to the skin or eyes
- symptoms of sunburn (such a redness, itching, swelling or blistering of the skin) which happens more quickly than normal
- abnormally low body temperatures (below 35° C) in children treated for influenza

The above side effects may be serious. You may need urgent medical attention.

Tell your doctor if you notice anything else that is making you feel unwell.

Other side effects not listed above may happen in some people.

After using Symmetrel

Storage

- Keep your capsules in the container until it is time to take them.
- Store the capsules in a cool dry place below 25 degrees C (room temperature).
- Do not store Symmetrel or any other medicine in the bathroom or near a sink.
- Do not leave it in the car or on window sills.

Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines. Symmetrel will keep well if it is cool and dry.

Keep the capsules where children cannot reach them.

A locked cupboard at least one-and-a-half metres above the ground is a good place to store medicines.

Disposal

If your doctor tells you to stop taking Symmetrel or you find that the expiry date has passed, ask your pharmacist what to do with any capsules you have left over.

Product description

What it looks like

Symmetrel 100mg: soft brown gelatin capsule, marked GEIGY on one side and GB on the other; containers of 100 capsules.

Ingredients

Active ingredient

amantadine hydrochloride 100 mg per capsule

Inactive ingredients

- rape seed oil
- soybean lecithin
- a wax blend composed of yellow beeswax and hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated soya bean oils
- sodium ethyl hydroxybenzoate
- sodium propyl hydroxybenzoate
- gelatin
- glycerol
- iron oxide red
- a sorbitol blend containing sorbitol, mannitol and hydrolysed starch (Karion 83)
- titanium dioxide
- white printing ink

Symmetrel does not contain sucrose, gluten, tartrazine or any other azo dyes.

Sponsor

Symmetrel is supplied in New Zealand by:

Novartis New Zealand Limited

PO Box 99102

Newmarket

Auckland 1149

Telephone 0800 354 335

® = registered trademark

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