

Exelon™ (also known as rivastigmine)

The purpose of this medicine:

Exelon is one of a group of drugs called “cholinesterase inhibitors” which is used to treat symptoms in individuals with mild to moderate Alzheimer Disease.

In brains of people with Alzheimer Disease there is a progressive degeneration of nerve cells. Particularly notable is a degeneration of cells, which make acetylcholine, a chemical, thought to be important for learning and memory. People with Alzheimer Disease have lower brain levels of acetylcholine. Exelon works by increasing the amount of acetylcholine in the brain. It does this by inhibiting or decreasing the activity of two cholinesterase enzymes whose function it is to breakdown acetylcholine. It is believed that because Exelon reduces the breakdown of acetylcholine, it will lead to an increase in the level of acetylcholine in the brain. Exelon’s potential beneficial effect may lessen as the disease process advances and fewer cells are available to make acetylcholine.

How does it help?

Exelon is intended to treat symptoms in individuals with mild to moderate Alzheimer Disease. In clinical trials, individuals who took Exelon when compared to individuals who took a placebo (a substance which looks like the drug but has no effect), showed improvement or no further decline in their ability to perform daily activities, their global functioning (including behaviour) and their cognitive function (including memory), orientation and language. Exelon may take as long as 12 weeks to be working and individual response to this medication will vary.

What does Exelon not do?

Exelon is not a cure for Alzheimer Disease as it does not affect the underlying process of the disease.

Who should take Exelon?

Individuals who have been diagnosed with mild to moderate Alzheimer Disease.

How do you obtain Exelon?

Exelon can only be obtained with a prescription from a doctor after a diagnosis of Alzheimer Disease has been made.

A reminder:

This medicine has been prescribed only for you or for the person you are caring for. It must not be given to anybody else or used for any other illness.

Important! Things to know before taking Exelon:

You should tell the doctor if you are taking other medications. You should also tell you doctor if you have other medical problems, such as conditions affecting your heart or you lungs; if you have had seizures; if you have had fainting spells; and if you have a history of peptic ulcers or have an increased risk of developing ulcers (for example, if you are taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs [NSAIDs] or high doses of acetylsalicylic acid [ASA/ Aspirin]). Your doctor will determine whether you can take Exelon and how closely you will need to be monitored.

How Do you take Exelon?

- Take Exelon only as prescribed by your doctor. Never change the does yourself.
- Exelon should be taken with food. Swallow the capsules whole with a drink, without opening or crushing them.
- You must take Exelon twice a day, once with your breakfast and once with your evening meal.
- Your doctor will tell you what dosage of Exelon to take, starting with a low dose and gradually increasing (to the best-tolerated dose), depending on how you respond tot he treatment. The highest dose what should be taken is 6 mg twice a day.
- To benefit for your medicine you must take it every day.
- If you find you have forgotten to take your does of Exelon, do not worry, wait and take the next does at the usual time. Do NOT take two does at once.
- If at anytime you stop taking Exelon for longer than several days, do NOT restart treatment without contacting your doctor.
- If you have problems remembering to take medication, it may be necessary to have someone manage it for you.

What are the possible side effects?

Along with its beneficial effect. Exelon may cause some undesirable reactions. In clinical studies most side effects of Exelon were mild to moderate in intensity. Caregivers and those taking Exelon should be advised that Exelon is associated with a high incidence of nausea and vomiting along with the possibility of anorexia (loss of appetite) and weight loss. Caregivers should be encouraged to monitor for these adverse

events and inform that doctor if they occur. Common side effects, in addition to nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and weight loss, include diarrhea, heartburn, stomach pains, dizziness, headache, weakness, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping. Some people also experienced fainting. Side effects are most likely to occur after increase in does and may go away with continual treatment. If they persist, however, you should tell your doctor. If you feel unwell or have any symptoms that you do not understand, or find distressing, you should contact your doctor immediately.

What to do if an overdose is taken:

If more medication has been taken than what has been prescribed, contact your doctor, hospital emergency department, or the nearest poison control centre immediately.

How do you store Exelon?

- Do not use Exelon after the expiry date shown on the bottle
- Store Exelon at room temperature (below 30° C)
- Keep Exelon in a safe place and out of reach of children

How much does it cost and who pays for this medicine?

Exelon cost approximately \$5.00 a day for both drug plans. At present, Exelon is covered under the provincial drug plan in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta. In other provinces, discussions are ongoing to have Exelon included on the different provincial drug plans. However, the drug manufacturer will cover the cost of Exelon until the optimal dose is reached. This will take about 12 weeks.

Who produces Exelon?

Novartis Pharma Canada Inc. 385 Bouchard Blvd. Dorval, Quebec H9R 4P5.

For Further Information:

This information sheet is a brief description and summary about this medicine. If you have any question about Exelon, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

This sheet is for your information only and does not represent an endorsement of Exelon™ by the Alzheimer society of Canada.

Please call the Alzheimer Society of Peel for further information:

Port Credit – 905-278-3667 Meadowvale – 905-542-7415 Brampton – 905-792-1319

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Fact Sheet - Alzheimer Society of Canada