

Educational Links (English):

- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/drugtreatmentofalzheimers.aspx>
- ❖ <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dementia/diagnosis-treatment/treatment/txc-20198533>
- ❖ <http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/tc/dementia-medications>
- ❖ http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_treatments.asp
- ❖ https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=147
- ❖ https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=110



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Lumos Psychiatric Services



Educational Booklet: Medications for Memory (Cognitive Enhancers)

Cognitive enhancers are medications used to treat dementia. Alzheimer's dementia is a loss of brain function that gradually worsens over time and affects memory, thinking and behavior.

Usually these medications are only effective in delaying the disease process. They're not dementia medications.

Other medicines may be required in very low doses to control aggressive, agitated, or dangerous behaviors.

Before starting a cognitive enhancer, notify your doctor if:

- ❖ Suffers from drug allergies
- ❖ Use over-the-counter or natural products
- ❖ Have bleeding problems or stomach ulcers
- ❖ Have kidney problems

Name of the two most common categories of cognitive enhancers:

- ❖ **Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors**
Donepezil (Aricept, Namzaric)
Rivastigmina (Exelon)
Galantamina (Razadyne, Reminyl)
- ❖ **N-Methyl-D-Aspartate Antagonist (NMDA)**
Memantina (Namenda, Namzaric)

These medications should be started in low doses to minimize side effects. The dose is then increased as needed.

The improvement in concentration and attention will take approximately several weeks to notice. The medicine should not be discontinued and the dose of the medicine should not be changed unless your doctor tells you to do so.

Indications for the use of a cognitive enhancer:

- ❖ Alzheimer's treatment - mild to moderate
- ❖ Parkinson's disease dementia (Rivastigmine)
- ❖ Treatment of Alzheimer's disease – severe (Donepezil and Memantine)

Most Common Side Effects of Cognitive Enhancers:

- ❖ Gastrointestinal problems (stomach upset, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, impotence)
- ❖ Muscle cramps
- ❖ Fatigue or weakness
- ❖ Agitation or anxiety
- ❖ Dizziness or confusion
- ❖ Nightmares or vivid dreams
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Loss of appetite or weight
- ❖ Muscle aches or cramps
- ❖ Nasal congestion
- ❖ “Hot flashes”
- ❖ Urinary incontinence or urine infections (Memantine)
- ❖ Rarer second-hand effects: change in urine color; irritation of the mouth, gums or throat; itching or rash of the skin; swelling of the face; yellowing of eyes or skin

Memantine toxicity – in case of overdose can cause effects on the central nervous system causing restlessness, drowsiness, visual hallucinations, seizures and loss of consciousness.

Contraindications to use a cognitive enhancer:

- ❖ If you have had a drug allergy
- ❖ Memantine - if you have severe kidney problems

General recommendations:

- ❖ See a psychiatrist for the treatment of your mental condition.
- ❖ Be patient about the response to medications.
- ❖ When taking your medicines, be aware of any side effects that may occur and report them to your doctor.
- ❖ Do not discontinue medicines without first discussing it with your doctor.
- ❖ Keep medicines in a safe place at room temperature.
- ❖ It is important to supplement the use of your medications by attending psychotherapy.

Practical recommendations for caregivers to reduce agitation and increase communication with dementia patients:

- ❖ Decrease excess stimuli around the patient
- ❖ Check the place and the environment, make sure it's a safe place
- ❖ Maintain the physical comfort of the patient
- ❖ Give simple, direct instructions to the patient
- ❖ Be patient
- ❖ Handle situations that arise calmly
- ❖ Set boundaries and structure
- ❖ Make sure your verbal language goes hand in hand with your physical language
- ❖ Maintain eye contact with the patient and a relaxed posture
- ❖ Identify situations or actions that result in agitation and try to avoid, minimize, or change them

REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS AS INDICATED BY YOUR MEDICAL WITHOUT MAKING CHANGES IN FREQUENCY OR PRESCRIPTION DOSAGE.

For questions or concerns, discuss it with your doctor.