

PROPRANOLOL ('Inderal')

Pro – pran – o – lol

Why have I been prescribed propranolol?

Propranolol can have several uses. Firstly it can help treat heart and blood pressure problems. Secondly, it can help control some of the more physical signs of anxiety. For example, mild shaking or tremor, racing heart beat and sweating. The more you have of these signs, the more anxious you may feel. Propranolol can reduce these and help break this "vicious circle". Thirdly, some antipsychotic drugs (also known as neuroleptics) can make people feel "restless". This means that you can't sit still and/or want to pace up and down all the time. This is called akathisia. Some antidepressants can also cause this side effect, but this is very rare. Propranolol helps to relieve this side effect. Propranolol may also help prevent migraine.

What exactly is propranolol?

Propranolol is also called a "beta-blocker". It has been around for 30 years or so and millions of people have now taken it. Most people find that propranolol helps some of their symptoms. If it doesn't help much, other options are available.

A common brand or trade name for propranolol is '*Inderal*'.

Is propranolol safe to take?

It is usually safe to have propranolol regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but it doesn't suit everyone. Let your doctor know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you have a history of asthma, are diabetic, or suffer from heart, liver or kidney trouble, or have a condition called phaeochromocytoma;
- b) if you are taking any other medication. This includes any other drugs used to lower blood pressure;
- c) if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

What is the usual dose of propranolol?

The dose for akathisia or anxiety can vary from 20mg to 80mg a day. It is usually divided into three doses, which are taken throughout the day.

How should I take propranolol?

Look at the label on your medicine; it should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow this advice carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. Most medicines are now supplied with an information leaflet for you to read.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Never change your dose without checking with your doctor. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time.

What will happen to me when I start taking propranolol?

Your feelings of restlessness or anxiety should go away, although this may take a few days. The full effect may take up to a week or so to come about.

Unfortunately, you might get some side effects from propranolol. Most of these are quite mild and should go away after a week or so. Look at the table over the page. It tells you what to do if you get any side effects. There are many other possible side effects. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.

Side effect	What is it?	What should I do if it happens to me?
COMMON		
COLD EXTREMITIES	Your toes and fingers feel cold. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.
FATIGUE	You feel tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.
UNCOMMON		
BRADYCARDIA	A very slow pulse (under 50 beats per minute).	Contact your doctor now.
DIZZINESS	Feeling light-headed and faint, especially when you stand up.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Don't drive.
SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION	Lack of libido or no interest in sex. Inability to maintain an erection.	Mention it to your doctor on your next visit.
SLEEP DISTURBANCES	You can't sleep very well and may have nightmares.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor.
STOMACH UPSET	This includes feeling sick or getting diarrhoea.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting propranolol, tell your doctor.
WHEEZINESS	When you find it difficult to breathe, and your chest feels tight. This may happen if you have asthma.	Contact your doctor now.
RARE		
DRY EYES	Your eyes feel dry.	Contact your doctor.
SKIN TROUBLE or RASHES	For example a rash or itching that you have not had before, or any psoriasis gets worse.	Contact your doctor now.

What about alcohol?

It is officially recommended that people taking propranolol should not drink alcohol. If the two are taken at the same time, drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls or accidents. Once people are used to taking propranolol, they can sometimes drink alcohol in small amounts without any harm. **Avoid alcohol** altogether for the first one or two months. After this, if you want a drink, try a glass of your normal drink and see how you feel. If this doesn't make you feel drowsy, then it is probably OK to drink small amounts. It pays to be very cautious because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication.

Don't stop taking your medication because you fancy a drink. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. If you do drink alcohol, drink only small amounts. Never drink any alcohol and drive.

When I feel better, can I stop taking it?

You and your doctor should decide together when you can come off your propranolol. Some people find that after a few months, they can stop taking it and the original side effects don't come back. Propranolol is not addictive.

Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet you may find a lot of information there as well, but be careful, as internet based information is not always accurate.



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This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. It is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information call the UKPPG National Telephone Helpline, 11am to 5pm, Monday to Friday on 020 7919 2999 or visit www.nmhct.nhs.uk/pharmacy

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