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AHFS Consumer Medication Information [Internet]. Bethesda (MD): American Society of Health-System Pharmacists; 2000-2011.

Desvenlafaxine (des ven' la fax' een)

Last Revision: January 15, 2012.

Warning

A small number of children, teenagers, and young adults (up to 24 years of age) who took antidepressants ('mood elevators') such as desvenlafaxine during clinical studies became suicidal (thinking about harming or killing oneself or planning or trying to do so). Children, teenagers, and young adults who take antidepressants to treat depression or other mental illnesses may be more likely to become suicidal than children, teenagers, and young adults who do not take

Show full warning

Why is this medication prescribed?

Desvenlafaxine is used to treat depression. Desvenlafaxine is in a class of medications called selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs). It works by increasing the amounts of serotonin and norepinephrine, natural substances in the brain that help maintain mental balance.

How should this medicine be used?

Desvenlafaxine comes as an extended-release (long-acting) tablet to take by mouth. It is usually taken once a day with or without food. Take desvenlafaxine at around the same time every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take desvenlafaxine exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.

Swallow the tablets whole with plenty of water; do not split, chew, crush, or dissolve them.

Desvenlafaxine controls depression, but does not cure it. It may take several weeks before you feel the full benefit of desvenlafaxine. Continue to take desvenlafaxine even if you feel well. Do not stop taking desvenlafaxine without talking to your doctor. Your doctor will probably decrease your dose gradually. If you suddenly stop taking desvenlafaxine, you may experience withdrawal symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, headache, irritability, difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, diarrhea, anxiety, extreme tiredness, unusual dreams, or sweating. Tell your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms while you are decreasing your dose of desvenlafaxine or soon after you stop taking desvenlafaxine.

Other uses for this medicine

This medication may be prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking desvenlafaxine,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to desvenlafaxine, venlafaxine (Effexor), or any other medications.
- tell your doctor if you are taking a monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitor, such as isocarboxazid (Marplan), linezolid (Zyvox), phenelzine (Nardil), selegiline (Eldepryl, Emsam, Zelapar), and

tranylcypromine (Parnate), or if you have stopped taking one of these medications within the past 14 days. Your doctor will probably tell you that you should not take desvenlafaxine. If you stop taking desvenlafaxine, your doctor will tell you that you should wait at least 7 days before you start to take an MAO inhibitor.

- you should know that desvenlafaxine is very similar to another SNRI, venlafaxine (Effexor). You should not take these medications together.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what other prescription and nonprescription medications or vitamins you are taking or plan to take. Be sure to mention any of the following: anticoagulants ('blood thinners') such as warfarin (Coumadin); certain antifungals such as itraconazole (Sporanox) and ketoconazole (Nizoral); amiodarone (Cordarone, Pacerone); aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn); clarithromycin (Biaxin); diuretics ('water pills'); lithium (Eskalith, Lithobid); medications for anxiety, mental illness, or seizures; methylene blue; certain medications for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) such as indinavir (Crixivan), nelfinavir (Viracept), and ritonavir (Norvir); medications for migraine such as almotriptan (Axert), eletriptan (Relpax), frovatriptan (Frova), naratriptan (Amerge), rizatriptan (Maxalt), sumatriptan (Imitrex), and zolmitriptan (Zomig); midazolam; nefazodone; sedatives; selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as citalopram (Celexa), escitalopram (Lexapro), fluoxetine (Prozac, Sarafem), fluvoxamine (Luvox), paroxetine (Paxil), and sertraline (Zoloft); other SNRIs such as duloxetine (Cymbalta); sibutramine (Meridia); sleeping pills; tramadol (Ultram); tranquilizers; and tricyclic antidepressants such as amitriptyline, amoxapine (Asendin), clomipramine (Anafranil), desipramine (Norpramin), doxepin (Sinequan), imipramine (Tofranil), nortriptyline (Aventyl, Pamelor), protriptyline (Vivactil), and trimipramine (Surmontil). Your doctor may need to change the doses of your medications or monitor you carefully for side effects. Many other medications may also interact with desvenlafaxine, so be sure to tell your doctor about all the medications you are taking, even those that do not appear on this list.
- tell your doctor what herbal products and nutritional supplements you are taking, especially St. John's wort and tryptophan.
- tell your doctor if you use or have ever used street drugs or have ever overused prescription medications. Also tell your doctor if you have recently had a heart attack and if you have or have ever had: bleeding problems; a stroke; high blood pressure; high cholesterol or triglycerides (fats in the blood); glaucoma (an eye disease); high pressure in the eyes (a condition that can lead to glaucoma); seizures; low sodium levels in the blood; or heart, kidney, or liver disease.
- tell your doctor if you are pregnant, especially if you are in the last few months of your pregnancy, or if you plan to become pregnant or are breast-feeding. If you become pregnant while taking desvenlafaxine, call your doctor. Desvenlafaxine may cause problems in newborns following delivery if it is taken during the last months of pregnancy.
- if you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking desvenlafaxine.
- you should know that desvenlafaxine may make you drowsy. Do not drive a car or operate machinery until you know how this medication affects you.
- ask your doctor about the safe use of alcoholic beverages while you are taking desvenlafaxine. Alcohol can make the side effects from desvenlafaxine worse.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, continue your normal diet.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Desvenlafaxine may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

constipation
loss of appetite
dry mouth
dizziness
extreme tiredness
unusual dreams
yawning
sweating
uncontrollable shaking of a part of the body
pain, burning, numbness, or tingling in part of the body
enlarged pupils (black circles in the centers of the eyes)
blurred vision
changes in sexual desire or ability
difficulty urinating

Some side effects can be serious. If you experience any of these symptoms or those listed in the IMPORTANT WARNING section, call your doctor immediately:

rash
hives
swelling
difficulty breathing
fast heartbeat
cough
chest pain
fever
coma (loss of consciousness for a period of time)
seizures
hallucinations (seeing things or hearing voices that do not exist)
fever, sweating, confusion, fast or irregular heartbeat, and severe muscle stiffness
unusual bleeding or bruising
nosebleeds
small red or purple dots on the skin
nausea
vomiting
diarrhea
headache
difficulty concentrating
memory problems
confusion
weakness
problems with coordination

increased falls

fainting

Desvenlafaxine may cause other side effects. Call your doctor if you have any unusual problems while taking this medication.

If you experience a serious side effect, you or your doctor may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online [at <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch>] or by phone [1-800-332-1088].

What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?

Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom). Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed. Talk to your pharmacist about the proper disposal of your medication.

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

Symptoms of overdose may include:

headache

vomiting

agitation

dizziness

nausea

constipation

diarrhea

dry mouth

pain, burning, numbness, or tingling in part of the body

fast heartbeat

What other information should I know?

Keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory. Your doctor will check your blood pressure often and may order certain lab tests to check your body's response to desvenlafaxine.

The extended-release tablet does not dissolve in the stomach after swallowing. It slowly releases the medicine as it passes through your digestive system. You may notice the tablet coating in the stool. This is normal and does not mean that you did not receive the complete dose of medication.

Do not let anyone else take your medication. Ask your pharmacist any questions you have about refilling your prescription.

It is important for you to keep a written list of all of the prescription and nonprescription (over-the-counter) medicines you are taking, as well as any products such as vitamins, minerals, or other dietary supplements. You should bring this list with you each time you visit a doctor or if you are admitted to a hospital. It is also important information to carry with you in case of emergencies.



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The following brand names are from RxNorm, a standardized nomenclature for clinical drugs produced by the National Library of Medicine:

Brand names

- Pristiq