

Guanfacine

Intuniv (ER) / Tenex (IR)

A nonstimulant that can help attention and impulse control. The regular tablet also treats high blood pressure.

From Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC's education collection ·

Draft for review · Clinical content has not been revalidated for this website.

DO NOT STOP SUDDENLY

IR: 1, 2 mg • ER: 1, 2, 3, 4 mg

IR and ER differ · Diagram labels reflect laboratory tests, not proven individual benefits.

What it is used for

ER tablets treat ADHD in children and teens, alone or with a stimulant. Adult ADHD use is off-label in the US. IR tablets treat high blood pressure.

It may also be prescribed off-label for tics or related symptoms. Ask what your treatment should improve; feeling sleepy is not the goal.

How it works

It affects brain signaling involved in attention and impulse control. It is not a stimulant and does not work like a quick boost of energy.

It also reduces part of the body's alerting response. Blood pressure and pulse may fall, and you may feel sleepy or dizzy.

What to expect over time

THE FIRST FEW DAYS

Drowsiness, dry mouth or dizziness may appear. Rise slowly and avoid driving until you know the effects.

AS THE DOSE CHANGES

Your team checks BP, pulse and side effects. ER increases are no more frequent than weekly.

THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

Review focus, behavior or your agreed goal. Benefit builds during dose adjustment; report excessive tiredness.

Taking your medication

Take it at the same time daily. ER may be taken morning or evening; follow your plan. Do not swap IR and ER or take both yourself.

Swallow ER tablets whole with water; never split, crush or chew. Do not take ER with a high-fat meal. Ask about grapefruit.

Refill early. If vomiting or running out could interrupt treatment, call your team. Never double a dose or stop suddenly.

When to get help

Call 911: collapse, trouble breathing, seizure, severe allergy, chest pain or stroke symptoms. For suspected overdose, call Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222 immediately.

Get urgent advice: fainting, severe dizziness or a very slow pulse. New unusually high energy, little need for sleep or risky behavior also needs prompt review.

After missed/stopped doses: severe headache, racing heart or chest tightness may mean rebound high blood pressure. Seek urgent care; do not self-adjust.

Early side effects

Sleepiness, fatigue, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, headache or stomach upset can occur. Fluids and fiber may help when appropriate. Avoid dehydration and overheating.

Other effects to discuss

Report persistent low energy, appetite or sexual changes, sleep trouble, irritability or urinary accidents. Do not assume ongoing problems must be tolerated.

What to keep track of

Keep BP/pulse checks. Track mood, sleep, daily function and children's growth.

Before you start

Tell your team about fainting, low BP, a slow pulse, heart rhythm problems, stroke, kidney/liver disease, bipolar symptoms or medication allergies. Review all medicines and supplements. An ECG or blood tests may be needed for your situation, but are not routine for everyone.

Medicines & interactions

Medicines that change the dose needed

Some antibiotics, antifungals, HIV medicines, nefazodone, carbamazepine, phenytoin, rifampin and St. John's wort change guanfacine levels. Check before starting or stopping them.

Alcohol and sedatives

Avoid alcohol. Opioids, benzodiazepines, sleep medicines and sedating allergy pills can increase impairment. Ask your pharmacist before combining them.

Blood-pressure and heart medicines

These may add dizziness, low BP or a slow pulse. A stimulant does not cancel these risks or reliably prevent sleepiness.

Food and other guanfacine products

Avoid high-fat meals with ER and discuss grapefruit. Check the formulation on refills; IR and ER are not dose-for-dose substitutes.

Everyday tips

Use a daily reminder and a refill buffer.

Keep regular sleep, meals and fluids.

Use ADHD or tic supports alongside medicine.

Bring a medicine list to every appointment.

Your questions, answered

What if I miss a dose?

For ER, skip it and take the next scheduled dose. Never double. If you miss two or more in a row, contact your prescriber before restarting; you may need a lower restart dose. IR instructions differ: check your pharmacy label.

Can I stop when I feel better?

Arrange a gradual reduction. Stopping suddenly can dangerously raise blood pressure, even though guanfacine is not controlled. If it makes you feel too slowed or unlike yourself, ask for an adjustment.

Is it safe with bipolar disorder?

Tell your team about past mood episodes. Unusually elevated or irritable mood and less need for sleep require review. Being a nonstimulant does not mean there is no mood risk.

Pregnant or breastfeeding?

Discuss an individual plan. Pregnancy and milk-transfer information is limited. Do not stop abruptly. If nursing, report unusual infant sleepiness, low energy or poor feeding.

Storage & safety

Keep in the original container, away from heat and moisture, locked out of reach of children and pets. An overdose can have delayed effects; get advice immediately rather than waiting for symptoms. Never share medicine.

A final reminder

Follow your prescribed plan.

About this information

For general information only; not a substitute for individualized medical advice. This sheet does not cover every risk or interaction. Ask your prescriber or pharmacist before changing how you take this medication.

Sources

1. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?lang=en&setid=b972af81-3a37-40be-9fe1-3ddf59852528>
 2. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=d9fdc4b4-5b00-46dd-8700-6e36ceaafb0e>
 3. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a601059.html>
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Educational inclusion does not mean this medication or its indications are treated at this practice. Review the guide for your exact product with your prescriber or pharmacist.

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