

# Cariprazine

Vraylar, an antipsychotic medicine

This medicine covers mania, bipolar depression, and psychosis, and it lingers in your body for weeks after each change.

## WHAT IT TREATS

**Bipolar, psychosis, depression**

## HOW YOU TAKE IT

**Once daily, food optional**

## WHEN IT WORKS

**1 to 2 weeks; more by 6**

## HABIT FORMING

**No**

### ⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Older adults with dementia have a higher chance of dying on this medicine, so it is not used for dementia. In young people it can bring on thoughts of suicide, especially early. Call **988** or your prescriber if that starts.

## 🕒 WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Cariprazine** adjusts dopamine signaling in a way that covers both the high and the low ends of bipolar disorder.
- It treats mania, bipolar depression, and schizophrenia, and it is also added to an antidepressant that is not enough alone.
- It has the best evidence in its group for the quiet symptoms of schizophrenia, like flat mood and pulling away from people.
- It is not a sedative and not habit forming. The point is to get your own range of thought and feeling back.

## 🕒 HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it **once a day**, with or without food, at a time you can keep. Morning is easiest for most people to remember.
- Swallow the capsule whole with water. Do not open it or sprinkle the contents on food unless your prescriber says to.
- Miss a dose? Take it when you remember unless the next one is close, and never take two capsules together.
- This medicine builds up slowly, so give each dose change **at least 2 weeks**, and often 4, before deciding about it.
- Store the capsules at room temperature and keep them out of steamy places like the bathroom cabinet.

## 📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Sleep and agitation usually settle first. Mood and clear thinking keep improving for **4 weeks** or more after a change.
- Working looks like a steadier baseline, fewer swings between wired and flattened, and interest in your own life returning.
- Because it clears so slowly, both benefits and side effects trail behind changes. Patience is genuinely part of the plan.
- Missing a single day matters less here than with most medicines, but do not treat that as permission to skip doses.

## 💖 COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- A cannot-sit-still, need-to-keep-moving feeling shows up in **1 in 5** people, usually in the two weeks after a dose step.
- That restlessness is a side effect, not your illness returning, and a lower dose or an added medicine usually settles it.
- Trouble sleeping, nausea, and constipation are common early. Water, fiber, and taking the dose in the morning all help.
- Weight gain is modest here, about **2 to 4 pounds**, with small changes in blood sugar and cholesterol over time.
- Those numbers are checked before you start, at 12 weeks, and yearly, so anything drifting gets caught early.
- Stiffness, tremor, or a slower walk can appear. Report it, because these are treatable and often dose related.

### ⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **911** for muscle stiffness with a high fever, confusion, or a racing heart. That combination is an emergency.
- Report movements of the mouth, tongue, or hands that you did not choose. Early treatment matters, so call right away.
- Call **988** if thoughts of ending your life show up, and tell your prescriber the same day.
- Call your prescriber for fainting, a seizure, or new urges to gamble, shop, eat, or have sex you cannot control.

## 🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Skip grapefruit and grapefruit juice, which raise the amount of this medicine in your blood unpredictably.
- Tell your prescriber before starting an antifungal, clarithromycin, or a seizure medicine, since each changes your level.
- Go easy on alcohol. It adds to drowsiness and works directly against the mood steadiness you are building.
- Wait to drive until you know how this affects you, especially in the weeks after starting or increasing it.
- Tell your prescriber if you are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are nursing, so you can weigh this together.

## 🛑 STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop **cariprazine** on your own. Symptoms may take weeks to return, which makes the connection easy to miss.
- Your prescriber can lower it in steps or switch you, and either is far safer than quietly not refilling it.
- Side effects can also linger for weeks after stopping, so do not expect an overnight change either way.
- If restlessness or cost is the real problem, name it. Both have fixes that do not mean going without treatment.

## ❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How many weeks should we wait before judging this dose?
- Is this aimed at my mania, my depression, or my thinking?
- Would a lower dose keep the benefit and drop the restlessness?
- When do we recheck my weight, blood sugar, and cholesterol?

# Where this information comes from

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## NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.