

## Bromocriptine (Parlodel)

When you first take bromocriptine you may feel a little light-headed or dizzy. Do not drive while affected if this happens to you.

Always take bromocriptine with a meal.

Keep your regular appointments with your doctor so your progress can be monitored. If you are taking bromocriptine long-term, you will need to have some tests from time to time.

### About bromocriptine

Type of medicine	A dopaminergic medicine
Used for	Disorders due to high prolactin levels (such as galactorrhoea and prolactinoma); Parkinson's disease; acromegaly
Also called	Parlodel® (US)
Available as	Tablets and capsules

Bromocriptine is prescribed for a number of different medical conditions. Your doctor will tell you why it has been prescribed for you.

Bromocriptine prevents the production of a chemical called prolactin. Prolactin is involved in a number of processes within the body, including milk production after childbirth. It also affects the levels of the hormones involved with controlling the menstrual cycle and fertility. Bromocriptine is therefore helpful in preventing or reducing milk production when this is needed for medical reasons. Likewise, it is helpful in some types of infertility, breast problems and menstrual problems caused by higher-than-usual levels of prolactin.

High levels of prolactin occur in people with prolactinomas. A prolactinoma is a non-cancerous swelling in the pituitary gland. This can cause various symptoms including reduced fertility, breast changes, and headaches. Prolactinomas can be treated successfully with medicines which reduce the production of prolactin, such as bromocriptine. In these cases, treatment is usually long-term.

Bromocriptine can be prescribed to treat [Parkinson's disease](#), although other treatments are usually preferred. In Parkinson's disease, a number of cells in a small part of the brain become damaged and die. These brain cells normally pass messages down nerves in the spinal cord by producing a chemical called dopamine, and it is these messages which control the muscles of the body. As the cells are damaged, the amount of dopamine that is produced is reduced. A combination of the reduction of cells and a low level of dopamine in the cells in this part of the brain, causes nerve messages to the muscles to become slowed and abnormal. This produces the main symptoms of Parkinson's disease, which are stiffness, shaking (tremor), and slowness of movement. Bromocriptine encourages the release of dopamine which helps to ease these symptoms.

Bromocriptine also affects the production of growth hormone and has sometimes been used for the treatment of conditions such as acromegaly, although other treatments are often preferred. [Acromegaly](#) is a disorder which causes enlargement of the hands and feet, and makes facial features more prominent.

## Before taking bromocriptine

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking bromocriptine it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you have high blood pressure (hypertension), or if you have ever had high blood pressure during or soon after a pregnancy (pre-eclampsia).
- If you have a heart condition or blood vessel disease.
- If you have ever had a stomach ulcer.
- If you have a problem with the way your liver works.
- If you have a circulation problem called Raynaud's syndrome.
- If you have ever had a serious mental health problem, such as a psychotic disorder.
- If you have a rare inherited blood disorder called porphyria.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

## How to take bromocriptine

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about bromocriptine and will provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you may experience from taking it.
- The dose you will need to take will depend upon the reason you are taking bromocriptine. Your doctor or pharmacist will tell you how much to take and when, and your dose will also be printed on the label of the pack to remind you. Read the directions from your doctor carefully and take bromocriptine exactly as you are told to. If you are taking bromocriptine for the first time, your doctor will give you a small dose and then gradually increase your dose over a few days. Slowly increasing your dose like this will help to reduce side-effects, such as dizziness, which can occur during the first few days of treatment.

- Try to take bromocriptine at the same time(s) each day. This will help you to remember to take it regularly. Swallow your dose with a drink of water at a mealtime.
- If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If when you remember, it is nearly time for your next dose then take your next dose when it is due but leave out the missed dose. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

## Getting the most from your treatment

- Try to keep your regular appointments with your doctor so your progress can be checked. Bromocriptine can occasionally cause lung problems, particularly in people who take it over a long period of time. In order for your doctor to check for this, you may need to have lung function tests, blood tests and an X-ray from time to time if you are taking bromocriptine long-term.
- If you are a woman (and taking bromocriptine for reasons other than trying for a baby) you may want to discuss suitable contraception with your doctor before taking bromocriptine. Hormonal forms of contraception (such as 'the pill') may not be suitable while you are taking bromocriptine.
- Sometimes people taking bromocriptine can fall asleep suddenly with little or no warning of being tired beforehand. Until you know how you react, take extra care if you drive or if you operate machinery. If you do find yourself falling asleep suddenly, you should see your doctor as soon as possible for advice; avoid driving and avoid using tools and machines in the meantime.
- Treatment with medicines like bromocriptine can sometimes cause problems with impulsive types of behaviour. If you notice any changes in your behaviour, such as an increased desire to gamble, binge eat, or spend excessively, or an increased sex drive, you must let your doctor know as soon as possible.
- If you drink alcohol, ask your doctor for advice. Your doctor may advise you not to drink alcohol while you are taking bromocriptine.

## Can bromocriptine cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with bromocriptine. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

<b>Common bromocriptine side-effects (these affect fewer than 1 in 10 people)</b>	<b>What can I do if I experience this?</b>
Feeling sleepy or dizzy	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines until you feel better
Feeling sick (nausea)	Stick to simple meals - avoid rich or spicy foods. Remember to take your doses with food
Constipation	Try to eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water each day
Headache	If the headache is severe or continues, speak with your doctor straightaway; otherwise, ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller
Blocked or stuffy nose	If this becomes troublesome, speak with your doctor

Occasionally, bromocriptine can cause some more serious side-effects. Although these occur much less commonly than the side-effects listed above, it is important that you contact your doctor for advice straightaway if you develop any of the following:

- Any breathlessness or difficulties breathing, or a cough that won't go away.
- Chest or tummy (abdominal) pain or discomfort.

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to bromocriptine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

## **How to store bromocriptine**

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

# Important information about all medicines

If you are due to have an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

If you take any medicines that you have bought without a prescription, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with your prescribed medicines.

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Report suspected side effects to medicines, vaccines, e-cigarettes, medical device incidents, defective or falsified (fake) products to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to ensure safe and effective use.

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## Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Bromocriptine 2.5 mg tablets](#); Mylan Products Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated June 2021.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 88th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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