DRUG NAME: GEODON
Generic name: ziprasidone

General Information: Geodon is one of a new generation of drugs called “atypical antipsychotics” approved by the FDA for treatment of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Though “off-label” and not officially approved by the FDA, it is also used to augment the effect of antidepressants in the treatment of depression and anxiety, particularly severe conditions. Its therapeutic action is thought to relate to modulation of dopamine and serotonin receptors in the brain.

Guidelines for Use: Geodon is available in 20, 40, 60, and 80 mg. capsules. Capsules may be combined to adjust dosage. No generic form is available at present. The usual starting dose is 20 mg. once or twice per day. It should be taken with food. The dosage can be increased over time to control symptoms, up to a usual maximum of 160 mg. daily. While Geodon may have an immediate calming or sedating effect, it may take several weeks for the full therapeutic effects to be seen. It is frequently used for long-term maintenance in severe disorders. Geodon is not habit-forming.

If you forget to take this medication but remember within a few hours, take it when you remember. Otherwise, wait until your next dose. Do not take double doses. Store the drug in a dry, tightly-closed, light-resistant container out of the reach of children.

Side Effects of Geodon:

*Note: Most side effects taper off during treatment as you become used to the drug.

Common side effects (10% or more of users experience; notify your clinician if severe):

--nausea, upset stomach    --drowsiness    --dizziness

Less common side effects (less than 10% of users experience; notify if severe):

--constipation or diarrhea    --restlessness*    --cough, cold symptoms
--runny nose                --dry mouth    --weight gain**
--abnormal muscle movements*    --weakness, tremor, rigidity*
--slow or rapid heart rate    --change in heart rhythm***
--skin rash: STOP THE DRUG AND CALL YOUR CLINICIAN.

*Another medication may be added to reduce these side effects.

**Since significant weight gain can have implications for your general health, it is advisable to keep track of your weight and let your clinician know if it is increasing. Lab work may be ordered for some people taking Geodon to monitor blood glucose, cholesterol, and other indices related to weight gain and its complications.
***Geodon slightly increases risk of a heart rhythm disturbance called “prolonged QT interval.” This can be dangerous, and a few sudden deaths have been reported. Risk of QT prolongation is further increased when medications with this risk are combined, so it is imperative to let your clinician about all other medications you are taking. Some people have a naturally long QT interval or a heart condition that increases QT interval, so it is strongly advised that people taking Geodon be monitored with electrocardiograms. CALL YOUR CLINICIAN OR GO TO AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE PALPITATIONS OR FAINTING WHILE TAKING GEODON.

Prolonged use of Geodon is associated with slight risk of developing a side effect known as tardive dyskinesia (TD), which causes people to have uncontrollable muscle movements. These often affect the face, mouth, and tongue but can affect any part of the body. Movements may be subtle or marked. TD is sometimes reversed by stopping the drug, but may be permanent. You should work with your clinician to ensure that you are taking the lowest effective dose of Geodon to minimize risk of TD. At the same time, it is a highly effective drug and the serious mental health conditions for which it is used often require long-term medication maintenance. You, your loved ones, and your clinician will need to assess the risk/benefit balance in taking drugs with risk of TD.

**Precautions:** Do not take this drug if you have ever had an allergic reaction to Geodon. Inform your clinician if you have any known allergies; if you have ever had seizures or been diagnosed with epilepsy, kidney disease, or liver disease; if you are taking any other drug (prescription or non-prescription), vitamin, supplement, or herb; or if you are undergoing anesthesia or surgery while taking this drug. Inform your clinician if you are or might become pregnant. Except in unusual cases where the mother’s or the fetus’ life is endangered, this drug should not be taken by pregnant women. Women taking Geodon should not breast feed. Geodon has not been tested in children and is not recommended for use by infants or children. Metabolism of the drug may be slowed in the elderly, so lower doses may be needed. Elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis treated with atypical antipsychotics are at an increased risk of death compared to placebo. Geodon is not approved for the treatment of dementia-related psychosis.

**This drug may cause drowsiness.** If so, avoid driving or operating machinery until you are sure your alertness and coordination allow for safe operation.

Do not discontinue this drug without consulting with your clinician. Geodon should be tapered down slowly and you should be monitored for the re-emergence of symptoms.

To date, overdoses of Geodon alone have rarely been fatal. However, because of the risk of heart rhythm disturbances, immediate emergency medical care should be sought in cases of overdose, particularly if multiple drugs and/or alcohol are suspected. Symptoms of overdosage include drowsiness, sedation, slurred speech, and increased blood pressure.
**Interactions:**

**Alcohol:** You should avoid alcohol while taking Geodon.

**Food/beverages:** Avoid grapefruit juice, as it interferes with a liver enzyme that is needed to metabolize Geodon.

**Other drugs:** These drugs may interact with Geodon: carbamazepine (Tegretol), fluconazole (Diflucan), ketoconazole (Nizoral), itraconazole (Sporanox), erythromycin, clarithromycin (Biaxin), fluvoxamine, paroxetine (Paxil), and others. Discuss with your clinician. Care should be taken when Geodon is used with other medicines that lower blood pressure due to increased risk of dizziness and falling. Geodon may increase the effects of other sedating medications such as antihistamines, sedatives, narcotics, muscle relaxants, barbiturates and anesthetics. Geodon may decrease the effects of levodopa.