DRUG NAME: **Risperdal**  
Generic name: risperidone

**General Information:** Risperdal is one of a new generation of drugs called “atypical antipsychotics” approved by the FDA for the 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 blocking of dopamine and serotonin receptors in the brain.

**Guidelines for Use:** Risperdal is available in 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2, 3, and 4 mg. tablets, and in a liquid. Tablets may be broken in half to get the correct dosage. No generic form is available at present. The usual starting dose is 0.25 - 1 mg. once or twice per day. It may be taken with or without food. The dosage can be increased over time to control symptoms, up to a usual maximum of 8 mg. daily. While Risperdal 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. Risperdal 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 Risperdal:**

*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):

--agitation, restlessness*  
--abnormal gait*  
--insomnia  
--headache  
--tremor*  
--runny nose

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

--constipation  
--cough, sore throat  
--increased saliva*  
--menstrual changes; abnormal lactation  
--weight gain**  
--dizziness  
--increased heart rate  
--sexual dysfunction  
--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 Risperdal to monitor blood glucose, cholesterol, and other indices related to weight gain and its complications.*
Prolonged use of Risperdal is associated with slightly increased 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 Risperdal 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 Risperdal. 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; if you are undergoing anesthesia or surgery while taking this drug; if you are a cigarette smoker. **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 Risperdal should not breast feed. Risperdal 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 antipsychotics are at an increased risk of dying compared to placebo. Risperdal is not approved for this purpose.

**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. Risperdal should be tapered down slowly and you should be monitored for the re-emergence of symptoms.

To date, overdoses of Risperdal alone have rarely been fatal. However, 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, rapid heart rate, dizziness due to low blood pressure, and muscle stiffness.

**Interactions:**

**Alcohol:** You should avoid alcohol while taking Risperdal.  
**Food/beverages:** No restrictions.  
**Other drugs:** These drugs may interact with Risperdal: fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), fluphenazine (Prolixin), haloperidol (Haldol), thioridazine (Mellaril), amitriptyline, bupropion (Wellbutrin, Zyban), clozapine (Anafranil), desipramine, diphenhydramine (Benadryl), quinidine, clozapine (Clozaril), carbamazepine (Tegretol) and others. Discuss with your clinician. Care should be taken when Risperdal is used with other medicines that lower blood pressure due to increased risk of dizziness and falling. Risperdal may increase the effects of other sedating medications such as antihistamines, sedatives, narcotics, muscle relaxants, barbiturates and anesthetics.