DRUG NAME: SEROQUEL
Generic name: quetiapine

General Information: Seroquel 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 blocking of dopamine and serotonin receptors in the brain.

Guidelines for Use: Seroquel is available in 25, 50, 100, 200, 300, and 400 mg. tablets. Tablets should not be broken. No generic form is available at present. The usual starting dose is 25-50 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 maximum of 800 mg. daily. While Seroquel 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. Seroquel 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 Seroquel:

*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):

--drowsiness  --dizziness  --headache

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

--constipation  --upset stomach  --dry mouth
--runny nose  --weight gain*  --increased heart rate
--skin rash: STOP THE DRUG AND CALL YOUR CLINICIAN.

*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 Seroquel to monitor blood glucose, cholesterol, and other indices related to weight gain and its complications.

In preclinical testing, dogs sometimes developed cataracts when chronically dosed with Seroquel. Lens changes have been observed in humans using Seroquel as well, though no causal relationship has been firmly established. You should have your eyes tested once or twice per year for lens changes if you are on Seroquel long term.
Prolonged use of Seroquel 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 Seroquel 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 Seroquel. 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 Seroquel should not breast feed. Seroquel 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. Seroquel is not approved for this purpose.

**This drug often causes 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. Seroquel should be tapered down slowly and you should be monitored for the re-emergence of symptoms.

To date, overdoses of Seroquel 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, and dizziness due to low blood pressure.

**Interactions:**

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

**Food/beverages:** Avoid grapefruit juice; no other restrictions.

**Other drugs:** The following drugs may interact with Seroquel: ketoconazole (Nizoral), itraconazole (Sporanox), fluconazole (Diflucan), erythromycin and clarithromycin, fluvoxamine (Luvox), paroxetine (Paxil), protease inhibitors, and others. Discuss with your clinician. Care should be taken when Seroquel is used with other medicines that lower blood pressure due to increased risk of dizziness and falling. Seroquel may increase the effects of other sedating medications such as antihistamines, sedatives, narcotic pain medicines, muscle relaxants, barbiturates and anesthetics. Check with your clinician before taking one of these medications.