
TRAZODONE (Desyrel) Fact Sheet [G]

Bottom Line:

Trazodone is most commonly used as a hypnotic at low doses (25–50 mg), but at higher doses it is effective for depression, and it has the advantage of fewer sexual side effects and less weight gain compared to other serotonergic antidepressants.

FDA Indications:

Major depression.

Off-Label Uses:

Insomnia; anxiety.

Dosage Forms:

Tablets (G): 50 mg, 100 mg, 150 mg, 300 mg (scored).

Dosage Guidance:

- Depression: Start 50 mg TID; ↑ by 50 mg/day every three to four days until response (usually 300–400 mg/day); max 600 mg/day.
- Insomnia (off-label): Start 25–50 mg QHS; may ↑ by 50 mg increments up to 200 mg QHS.
- Dose timing: Generally best given at bedtime, though some patients find the medication stimulating and need to take it in the morning.

Monitoring: No routine monitoring recommended unless clinical picture warrants.

Cost: \$

Side Effects:

- Most common: Drowsiness, dry mouth, dizziness or lightheadedness, orthostatic hypotension, headache, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting.
- Serious but rare: Reports of priapism (painful erection lasting longer than six hours); may require surgical or pharmacologic (eg, epinephrine) intervention and may result in impotence or permanent impairment of erectile function. Orthostatic hypotension and syncope reported (less at hypnotic doses).
- Pregnancy/breastfeeding: Limited data suggest relative safety in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Mechanism, Pharmacokinetics, and Drug Interactions:

- Serotonin reuptake inhibitor, alpha-1 adrenergic receptor antagonist, and serotonin 5-HT_{2A} and 5-HT_{2C} receptor antagonist.
- Metabolized primarily through CYP3A4 to active metabolite (mCPP), which in turn is metabolized by 2D6; induces P-glycoprotein; $t_{1/2}$: 7–10 hours.
- Avoid use with MAOIs.

Clinical Pearls:

- Food delays absorption of trazodone for one to two hours, so it's best taken on an empty stomach when used for insomnia. Trazodone's hypnotic effects are not due to anticholinergic or antihistaminergic effects.
- Rarely used as antidepressant due to risk for over-sedation and orthostasis at therapeutic doses; majority of use currently is for insomnia.

Fun Fact:

As a consequence of the production of mCPP as a metabolite, patients taking trazodone may test positive on urine tests for the presence of MDMA (ecstasy).