

***About your medication***

**SERTRALINE**

(ZOLOFT® 50mg, 100mg tablets)

*Other brands may be available*

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## **WHAT IS SERTRALINE?**

Sertraline is from a group of anti-depressant medications known as serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs). It is only available on a doctor's prescription.

## **WHAT IS IT FOR?**

Sertraline is mainly used in adults to treat severe emotional problems that interfere with normal life. These problems can include severe forms of depression, anxiety, and obsessive compulsive disorder.

In children and adolescents, there is less experience in treating severe emotional problems with sertraline. Most experience is in treating obsessive compulsive disorder.

The use of sertraline to treat a child or adolescent with severe emotional problems should occur with caution and be part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes non-medication treatments.

Specialists such as Child Psychiatrists and Developmental Paediatricians should supervise treatment with these medicines.

## **HOW TO TAKE THIS MEDICINE**

It is important that this medicine is given only as directed and not given to other people.

Treatment starts with a low dose and is adjusted by your doctor according to the response. Most anti-depressant medications take time to work so don't be discouraged if the sertraline seems not to be working immediately. It may take two to four weeks or even longer to feel the full benefit of sertraline.

Sertraline can be taken with food or on an empty stomach.

It is best to give the medicine in the morning. If two doses a day are required, it is best given in the morning and the early afternoon.

## **WHAT TO DO IF A DOSE IS MISSED**

If your child misses a dose of the medication it can be given as soon as you remember. Do not give the missed dose if it is close to the next one; just give the next dose as normal. Do not double up on any doses.

## **STORING THE MEDICINE**

It is important to keep sertraline locked away out of the reach of children.

Do not keep the tablets in the bathroom, near the kitchen sink or in other damp, warm places because this may make them less effective. Store in a cool, dry place, away from heat and direct light.

## **USE OF OTHER MEDICINES**

Care must be taken when using sertraline with some other medications. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving any prescription medicine or medicine purchased without prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket, or health food shop. This is important for:

- Medicines that make you sleepy (e.g. sedatives, some cold or allergy medicines, strong pain killers, muscle relaxants or tranquillisers)
  - Other drugs used to treat depression (e.g. MAO Inhibitors, moclobemide, tricyclic antidepressants)
  - Warfarin or other anti-coagulants (blood thinners).
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Some medications taken with antidepressants may cause an overload of the brain chemical serotonin. Dangerous side effects such as seizures, overheating, confusion and diarrhoea may occur. In particular, this can be a problem if your child is taking;

- other antidepressants including natural products such as St Johns Wort or tryptophan
- pain relievers such Pethidine and Tramadol
- cough mixtures containing Dextromethorphan
- appetite suppressants
- migraine treatments

This list is not complete. Talk to your child's doctor or pharmacist about possible interactions with any over-the-counter or complementary medicines or recreational substances (e.g. alcohol)

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- It is important that the doctor is able to check your child's progress with regular visits to allow for changes in the dose and to reduce any side effects.
- Sertraline may make your child sleepy or dizzy. Care must be taken with activities like riding bikes or climbing trees, until you know how this medicine will affect your child.
- Do not stop taking this medication without the advice of your child's doctor. Gradual withdrawal, overseen by your child's doctor is advised.

### **POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS**

Side effects can occur while taking sertraline. Some of these are not serious and will go away with time or after the dose has been changed. Others are more serious and require you to check with your doctor.

#### **Less serious side effects include:**

- stomach upsets and loose bowel actions
- agitation and restlessness, sleeping problems
- headaches
- weight gain or weight loss
- decreased sexual desire and function in young adults.

***If any of these are a problem, contact the doctor who may change the medication.***

#### **More Serious** (Contact doctor *as soon as possible* if any of the following occur)

- Thoughts of wanting to die, wanting to self-harm or becoming hostile and aggressive to others. Children and adolescents with emotional problems often have these symptoms before taking antidepressants. However these symptoms may get worse, particularly in the first couple of months after the antidepressant is started, when doses are increased or if the medication is stopped suddenly.

**There is an increased risk of suicidal thought or behaviour with all SSRI medications, especially early on in treatment. It is important that you/your child is closely monitored whilst taking this medication**

- Abnormal thoughts of self importance, loss of self control, fast and often senseless talking, danger-seeking activities and the need for only small amounts of sleep. These may be signs of mania. They may be more likely to occur if a child is from a family with a history of bipolar disorder.
- Increased bruising and bleeding.
- Unexplained fever, especially if accompanied by muscle stiffness or uncontrollable movements of the body or shivering

#### **Allergic reaction** (Stop medicine and see doctor immediately):

- Skin rash, itching or hives, swollen mouth or lips, wheezing or difficulty breathing

*IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS CONTACT*



***Your Child's Doctor via the RCH Switchboard on 03 9345 5522***  
**OR**

***Pharmacy Department on 03 9345 5492***  
***IN CASE OF POISONING OR OVERDOSE CONTACT***  
***POISONS INFORMATION CENTRE 13 11 26 (24 hour service)***

This leaflet answers some common questions about your child's medicine. It does not contain all available information. It does not take the place of talking to your child's doctor or pharmacist. The leaflet may differ from information in the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information. The information in this leaflet reflects the usage of medicine under medical supervision by patients of The Royal Children's Hospital. Medicine may be used in children in different ways or for different reasons than in adults - for more information see the leaflet "[Medicines for Children](#)". This leaflet includes information current at the time of review of the document – OCTOBER 2010.