

Facts about guanfacine ER (Intuniv)



Generic Name: guanfacine ER

Brand Name: Intuniv (long-acting form of guanfacine)

FDA indication for treatment of ADHD in youth ages 6-17.

Dose forms/Strengths: 1 mg, 2 mg, 3 mg, and 4 mg tabs (which should not be cut or crushed)

Dosing: It is given once daily, usually in the early morning, and has peak plasma levels about 4-8 hours after ingestion. Average half-life is about 18 hours (+/- 4 hours). Steady state blood levels are usually achieved within four days.

Therapeutic category:

- Guanfacine ER is an anti-hypertensive agent, a selective alpha-2A-adrenergic-receptor agonist that tends to prevent or reduce the hyper-arousal of the autonomic nervous system.
- Guanfacine ER reduces hyperactivity and enhances frustration tolerance and affect modulation. It appears to facilitate voluntary selective processes essential to willful cognition and discriminant attention. Guanfacine ER and its metabolites are excreted mainly by the kidneys.
- Guanfacine ER can be used as monotherapy in treating ADHD, but it is often used in combination with a stimulant, and may allow for using a lower dose of stimulant than may be necessary without it.

Common adverse reactions/Side effects: It has a mild side effect profile, which includes dry mouth, sedation, fatigue, dizziness, low blood pressure, constipation, irritability, and abdominal pain. Most are mild and transient.

Rare but serious adverse reactions: There is one report of five cases of intense activation resembling symptoms of an acute-onset manic episode that occurred within three days of starting immediate-release guanfacine. (All five patients had a personal or family history of bipolar disorder.)

Guanfacine ER is a useful agent for reducing several symptoms areas seen in youth and its side effect potential is fairly benign.

Additional Notes:

- There is no known potential for abuse.
- Besides its use in ADHD, it has been used (off-label) in the treatment of Tourette's syndrome since it has tic-suppressant benefit and may also help with the ADHD symptoms which occur in 50-60% of youth with Tourette's syndrome.
- It has also been used (off-label) to reduce the hyper-startle effects in PTSD, and to improve the poor frustration tolerance in youth with Intermittent Explosive Disorder.