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## PACKAGE LEAFLET: INFORMATION FOR THE PATIENT

# Mestinon® retard 180 mg, prolonged-release tablet

For adult use

Active substance: pyridostigmine bromide

**Read all of this leaflet carefully before you start taking this medicine because it contains important information for you.**

- Keep this leaflet. You may need to read it again.
- If you have any further questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- This medicine has been prescribed for you only. Do not pass it on to others. It may harm them, even if their signs of illness are the same as yours.
- If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. This includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet. See section 4.

### What is in this leaflet

1. What Mestinon® retard is and what it is used for
2. What you need to know before you take Mestinon® retard
3. How to take Mestinon® retard
4. Possible side effects
5. How to store Mestinon® retard
6. Contents of the pack and other information

### 1. What Mestinon® retard is and what it is used for

The active substance in Mestinon® retard, pyridostigmine bromide, belongs to a group of medicines known as cholinesterase inhibitors. These active substances inhibit the cholinesterase enzyme from breaking down acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter of nerve impulses to the muscles. This increases the effect of acetylcholine and improves muscle performance in cases of abnormal muscle weakness.

### What Mestinon® retard is used for

Mestinon® retard is used to treat abnormal muscle weakness (myasthenia gravis) in adults.

### 2. What you need to know before you take Mestinon® retard

#### Do not take Mestinon® retard:

- If you are allergic to pyridostigmine bromide, other bromides or any of the other ingredients of this medicine (listed in section 6).
- If you suffer from mechanical obstruction of the gastrointestinal or urinary tract.

#### Warnings and precautions

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking Mestinon® retard.

If you have a respiratory illness such as bronchial asthma, spastic bronchitis or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), taking this medicine may cause dangerous bronchoconstriction or reduced lung function. Therefore, if you have any of these illnesses, take special care with Mestinon® retard.

If you have heart disease such as decompensated heart failure (symptoms at rest), cardiac conduction disorders (AV block) or cardiac arrhythmias such as slow heart rate, or have recently had a heart attack,

your doctor must carefully weigh up the risks and benefits of treatment with Mestinon® retard. Arrhythmias tend to be more common in older patients than young adults.

Take care with Mestinon® retard if you have:

- low blood pressure
- vagotonia (with symptoms such as low blood pressure, low heart rate, contracted pupils)
- peptic ulcer
- a history of gastrointestinal surgery
- epilepsy
- Parkinson's disease
- an overactive thyroid gland
- impaired kidney function

If you are taking very high doses of Mestinon® retard, you may need atropine or other anticholinergic substances to specifically counteract the muscarinic effect without impairing the nicotinic effect.

An overdose of this medicine can cause a cholinergic crisis, which manifests as pronounced or increased muscle weakness (see 3. - "If you take more Mestinon® retard than you should").

After surgery to remove the thymus gland (thymectomy), the dose prescribed by your doctor may need to be reduced.

#### Patients who have kidney disease

The active substance in Mestinon® retard is excreted largely unchanged by the kidneys. Therefore, patients with kidney disease may need lower doses (see section 3. "How to take Mestinon® retard").

#### Other medicines and Mestinon® retard

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking, have recently taken or might take any other medicines.

#### Medicines that reduce immune system function (immunosuppressants)

If you are also under treatment with corticosteroids or medicines that reduce immune system function, the dose prescribed by your doctor may need to be reduced. However, the administration of corticosteroids may initially aggravate the symptoms of myasthenia gravis.

#### Methylcellulose

Methylcellulose may prevent the absorption of this medicine. Avoid using medicines containing methylcellulose at the same time as Mestinon® retard.

#### Anticholinergics

Atropine and scopolamine inhibit the muscarinic effect of pyridostigmine bromide, the active substance in Mestinon® retard. These substances reduce intestinal motility, which can affect the absorption of pyridostigmine bromide by the body.

#### Medicines that temporarily relax the skeletal muscles (muscle relaxants)

Pyridostigmine bromide inhibits the effect of non-depolarizing muscle relaxants (e.g. pancuronium, vecuronium). Pyridostigmine bromide may prolong the blocking effect of depolarizing muscle relaxants (e.g. suxamethonium).

#### Other medicines

Antibiotics of the aminoglycoside group (e.g. neomycin, kanamycin), local anesthetics and some general anesthetics, medicines to treat arrhythmias and other substances that interfere with transmission between nerves and muscles can influence the effect of pyridostigmine bromide.

Avoid applying N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide (DEET), e.g. contained in Autan®, to large areas of the skin while taking Mestinon® retard.

#### Pregnancy, breast-feeding and fertility

If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, think you may be pregnant or are planning to have a baby, ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice before taking this medicine.

#### Pregnancy

The active substance in Mestinon® retard crosses the placental barrier. Therefore, only take this medicine during pregnancy if your doctor considers it absolutely necessary.

In particular, avoid taking high doses.

The intravenous administration of cholinesterase inhibitors – the group to which Mestinon® retard belongs – can cause premature contractions in pregnancy. The risk of premature contractions is highest towards the end of pregnancy.

It is not known whether there is a risk of premature contractions with oral use.

#### Breast-feeding

The active substance in Mestinon® retard passes into breast milk in small amounts. In a very limited number of cases studied, no effects have been observed to date on breast-fed infants/children. If treatment with Mestinon® retard is required, the infant should be monitored for possible effects or weaned.

#### Fertility

Mestinon® retard has not been found to have any effect on male or female fertility in animal studies.

#### Driving and using machines

Taking this medicine may impair the eye's ability to adapt to near or far vision, cause pupil contraction, and affect your ability to drive.

If the underlying illness is not adequately treated, or if you experience cholinergic effects after a relative overdose of Mestinon® retard (see section "If you take more Mestinon® retard than you should") it can affect your ability to drive and use machines.

### 3. How to take Mestinon® retard

Always take this medicine exactly as your doctor has told you. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

The dose of this medicine must be individually adjusted according to the severity of your illness and your response to treatment. Therefore, the following recommended doses only serve as a guide.

#### Adults

The recommended dose for adults is 1 to 3 prolonged-release tablets twice a day (corresponds to 360-1080 mg pyridostigmine bromide/day). Your doctor may prescribe a lower (it is possible to take half a prolonged-release tablet) or higher dose.

#### Elderly patients

There are no special recommended doses for elderly patients.

#### Patients with impaired kidney function

The active substance in Mestinon® retard is mainly excreted unchanged by the kidney. Therefore lower doses may be required in patients with impaired kidney function. The required dose should be determined individually depending on the effect.

#### Patients with reduced liver function

There are no special recommended doses for patients with reduced liver function.

#### Switching from Mestinon® 60 to Mestinon® retard

Note that Mestinon® retard exhibits a merely longer rather than stronger action (instead of 2 to 4 hours, the duration of action is 6 to 8 hours, sometimes longer). This means that you can take the tablets fewer times per day.

(**Example:** A patient who was taking 3 Mestinon® 60 coated tablets 6 times a day (= 6 x 3 x 60 mg = 1080 mg a day), now takes 3 Mestinon® retard prolonged-release tablets twice a day (= 2 x 3 x 180 mg = 1080 mg).

Most patients then have to adjust their dose of Mestinon® retard to their current needs. For this reason, the patient may have to be admitted to hospital.

How much Mestinon® retard you need to take may fluctuate due to infections or other negative factors. If this happens, ask your doctor immediately.

#### Route and method of administration

Take the prolonged-release tablets with plenty of liquid (preferably with a glass or half a glass of water). Do not take Mestinon® retard when lying down.

The prolonged-release tablets are scored so that they can be broken into halves. Half a prolonged-release tablet contains 90 mg pyridostigmine bromide.

For an undisturbed night's rest, take the last dose for the day at 10 p.m. Since the prolonged-release tablets you have taken during the day may not last until 10 p.m., you may have to bridge the time until 10 p.m. with Mestinon® 60 mg coated tablets.

#### Duration of treatment

Your doctor will decide on the duration of treatment.

#### Note

The active substance in the prolonged-release tablet is embedded in an insoluble tablet matrix to achieve modified release of the active substance. The indigestible matrix is excreted in the stool. The active substance is absorbed by the body.

#### If you take more Mestinon® retard than you should

Contact your doctor straight away.

Taking too much (overdose) of this medicine may cause a cholinergic crisis, which may lead to pronounced or increased muscle weakness through to paralysis, among other. If a situation like this is not recognized, there is a risk of life-threatening respiratory paralysis, which may lead to apnoea and a critical lack of oxygen supply of the brain in particularly serious cases.

Other symptoms can manifest as extreme slowing of the heart rate or even cardiac arrest; periodic acceleration of the heart rate, a drop in blood pressure through to circulatory collapse; dizziness, nausea and vomiting, involuntary discharge of urine, defecation accompanied by cramps, diarrhea, increased bronchial secretion, contraction of the bronchial muscles combined with possible constriction of the airways, pulmonary edema, increased tear secretion and salivation, increased nasal secretion, light to heavy sweating, reddened skin, contraction of the pupils and visual acuity disorder; occasional muscle cramps, involuntary muscle twitching, and general weakness.

Symptoms involving the central nervous system can arise, including anxiety, confusion, slurred speech, nervousness, irritability, and vivid hallucinations as well as seizures and coma (see section 4. "Possible side effects").

#### If you forget to take Mestinon® retard

Do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten dose.

#### If you stop taking Mestinon® retard

Talk to your doctor first before you stop taking Mestinon® retard.

If you have any further questions on the use of this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

### 4. Possible side effects

Like all medicines, this medicine can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them.

The following side effects may arise during treatment with Mestinon® retard:

**Rare** (may affect up to 1 in 1,000 people)

- Skin rash (usually subsides after the medication is discontinued. Medicines containing bromide should not be used).

**Frequency not known** (frequency cannot be estimated from the available data)

#### Immune system disorders

- Drug hypersensitivity (allergies)

#### Psychiatric illnesses

In the presence of organic brain changes, psychopathological symptoms through to psychosis may arise under treatment with Mestinon® retard; existing symptoms may intensify.

#### Nervous system disorders

- Circulatory collapse (syncope)

#### Eyes

- Contraction of the pupils
- Increased secretion of tears
- Impaired ability of the eye to adapt to near/far vision (e.g. blurred vision)

#### Cardiovascular system

- Arrhythmias (e.g. palpitations), accelerated heart rate, slow heart rate, cardiac conduction disorders (atrioventricular block), coronary vessel spasms (Prinzmetal angina)

#### Vascular disorders

- Sensation of heat
- Low blood pressure

#### Respiratory tract

- Increased bronchial secretion, combined with bronchoconstriction; asthmatics may experience respiratory symptoms.

#### Digestive tract

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Increased gastrointestinal activity, abdominal discomfort (e.g. malaise, pain, cramps)
- Increased salivation

#### Skin

- Excessive sweating
- Hives (urticaria)

#### Muscles

- Increased muscle weakness
- Reduced muscle tone
- Involuntary muscle twitching
- Muscle tremors
- Muscle cramps

#### Kidneys and urinary tract

- Increased urge to urinate

Side effects are generally dose-related:

In the course of treatment with Mestinon® retard (mostly with oral doses exceeding 150–200 mg pyridostigmine bromide/day) the following side effects in particular may arise: attacks of sweating, increased salivation, increased tear secretion, increased bronchial secretion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps (due to increased gastrointestinal activity), increased urge to urinate, muscle tremors, muscle cramps, muscle weakness, and impaired ability of the eye to adapt to near/far vision.

After taking higher doses (500–600 mg pyridostigmine bromide/day orally), the heart rate may slow and adverse cardiovascular reactions and too low blood pressure may arise (see 3. "If you take more Mestinon® retard than you should").

The side effects listed may also be signs of an overdose or a cholinergic crisis. It is important to check the cause of the side effects with your doctor.

#### Reporting of side effects

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

This includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet.

You can also report side effects directly to the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices, Pharmacovigilance Dept., Kurt-Georg-Kiesinger-Allee 3, 53175 Bonn, Germany, website: www.bfarm.de

By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.

### 5. How to store Mestinon® retard

Keep this medicine out of the sight and reach of children.

Do not use this medicine after the expiry date which is stated on the container and carton after <Verwendbar bis>. The expiry date refers to the last day of that month.

Do not store above 25 °C.

Keep in the original packaging.

Keep the glass bottle tightly closed to protect the contents against moisture.

#### Shelf life after opening

Glass bottle: Mestinon® retard has a shelf life of 6 months after opening.

Blister pack: Mestinon® retard must be taken immediately after removing it from the blister, since storing it out of the blister affects the shelf life.

Do not dispose of medicines via waste water or household waste. Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of medicines you no longer use. These measures will help protect the environment.

### 6. Contents of the pack and other information

#### What Mestinon® retard contains

The active substance is pyridostigmine bromide.

1 prolonged-release tablet contains 180 mg pyridostigmine bromide.

The other ingredients are:

carmauba wax, precipitated silicon dioxide, pentacalcium hydroxide tris(phosphate), zein, and magnesium stearate (Ph. Eur.).

#### What Mestinon® retard looks like and contents of the pack

Grey/yellow speckled cylindrical, biconvex prolonged-release tablets scored on one side. The score line is there to help you break the tablet if you have difficulty swallowing it whole.

Mestinon® retard is available in the following pack sizes:

- Glass bottle of 100 prolonged-release tablets
- Aluminium/aluminium blister packs containing 20, 50 or 100 prolonged-release tablets

Not all pack sizes may be marketed.

#### Marketing Authorisation Holder and Manufacturer

MEDA Pharma GmbH & Co. KG

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#### Other pharmaceutical forms:

Mestinon® 5, solution for injection

Mestinon® 10, tablet

Mestinon® 60, coated tablet

Information for myasthenia gravis patients:  
Deutsche Myasthenie - Gesellschaft e.V. is a national self-help group that supports the interests of myasthenia gravis patients  
Address:  
Deutsche Myasthenie - Gesellschaft e.V.  
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