

# Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril®)

## Why is this medication prescribed?

- Cyclobenzaprine is a short-term treatment (up to 3 weeks) for muscle spasm caused by acute/newly developed painful musculoskeletal conditions (e.g., conditions involving bones, muscles, joints, ligaments, and/or tendons).
- Cyclobenzaprine is classified as a cyclic antidepressant drug and commonly called a skeletal muscle relaxant or antispasmodic medication.
  - Cyclobenzaprine has a similar chemical structure and side effect profile as the tricyclic antidepressant medication class.
- Cyclobenzaprine works within the central nervous system to improve acute muscle spasm control and reduce pain and tenderness in the area impacted.
  - It is **NOT** an antispasticity medication - it is ineffective in managing spasticity related to brain or spinal cord disorders.
- This medication is meant to be used alongside physical therapy.

## How should this medication be used?

- Cyclobenzaprine comes as an oral 10 mg tablet.
  - The tablet can be split in half to give a 5 mg dose if needed.
  - This medication can be taken with or without food.
- A common dose of cyclobenzaprine is 5 to 10 mg three times a day for up to 3 weeks.
- The maximum dose of cyclobenzaprine is 20 mg three times a day (= 60 mg/day).
- Cyclobenzaprine is **NOT** recommended for patients already taking a tricyclic antidepressant (e.g., amitriptyline, nortriptyline).

*\*Cyclobenzaprine is **NOT** covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program.*

## When does this medication start to work?

Muscle spasm pain relief should start within 1 to 2 hours of taking cyclobenzaprine, with pain relief lasting 12 to 24 hours.

## What special precautions should I follow?

- Before taking cyclobenzaprine, talk with your doctor if you any of the following health issues:
  - Heart disease, including recent heart attack, irregular heartbeats
  - An overactive thyroid, glaucoma, or trouble urinating
  - Are pregnant or breastfeeding, or this situation is likely in the near future
- Cyclobenzaprine is poorly tolerated by older adults because it can cause drowsiness, mental fogging, as well as dry mouth and eyes. It can also increase the risk of falls and injury.
- Do **NOT** take cyclobenzaprine with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) medication (e.g., antidepressants phenelzine, tranylcypromine, or moclobemide; Parkinson's disease medications selegiline or rasagiline) or within 14 days of stopping a MAOI medication.

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- Use of cyclobenzaprine with other medications may result in drug interactions. Tell your pharmacist and doctor all the medications you take (prescription, non-prescription, herbals, over-the-counter products, etc.) so drug interactions can be minimized.
- Cyclobenzaprine can impact the mental/physical abilities needed to do certain tasks. It is best to wait until your body adjusts to this new medication or a dose change before driving or operating machinery.
- Avoid alcohol while taking cyclobenzaprine. Excessive drowsiness and impaired concentration can occur if cyclobenzaprine is taken with alcohol.
- Cyclobenzaprine should **NOT** be taken for more than 3 weeks as there is questionable benefit and increased harm from side effects.

### What should I do if I forget a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. In this case, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule.
- Do **NOT** double dose to make up for a missed dose.

### What are the possible side effects of this medication?

All medicines can cause side effects, which may range from mild to severe. Common side effects of cyclobenzaprine are:

- Dry mouth and eyes
- Constipation
- Sedation, drowsiness
- Trouble urinating
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Confusion, mental foginess

On occasion, cyclobenzaprine can cause fast or irregular heartbeat. Talk with your health care provider if you experience this.

Cyclobenzaprine acts on the chemical messenger serotonin and can contribute to serotonin syndrome if you are taking multiple medications that work on serotonin.

Remember that your doctor has prescribed cyclobenzaprine because the benefit to you is considered greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects.

### How should this medication be stored?

- Keep this medication tightly closed in the container it came in, and out of reach of children.
- Store at room temperature away from excess heat/moisture (not in the kitchen or bathroom).
- If cyclobenzaprine is stopped and you have remaining tablets on hand, please return them to your community pharmacy for proper medication disposal.