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Betahistine tablets (Serc)

Betahistine is used to ease the symptoms of Ménière's disease.

The usual dose is one tablet three times daily.

Where possible, take the tablets with something to eat.

About betahistine

Type of medicine	A histamine analogue
Used for	Ménière's disease symptoms in adults
Also called	Serc®
Available as	Tablets

Ménière's disease is a condition of the inner ear. It typically causes attacks of dizziness with a spinning sensation (vertigo), hearing loss and noises in the ear (tinnitus). The attacks can vary in severity, and in how often they occur. It is thought that a build-up of fluid in the inner ear causes the symptoms. Treatment can help to ease and prevent symptoms.

Betahistine is thought to work by increasing the blood flow around the inner ear. This reduces the amount of fluid in the inner ear and prevents symptoms from developing.

Before taking betahistine

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine can only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking betahistine it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you have ever had a stomach ulcer.
- If you have asthma.
- If you have a tumour on your adrenal gland, called phaeochromocytoma.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

How to take betahistine

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about betahistine, and will also provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you could experience from taking it.
- Take betahistine exactly as your doctor tells you to. It is usual to take one 16 mg tablet three times a day at first. Once your symptoms are under control, your doctor may then reduce your dose to one 8 mg tablet three times a day. You will find the directions for taking the tablets on the label of the pack to remind you about what the doctor said to you. Where possible, take betahistine tablets with something to eat, such as a snack or straight after a meal.
- Swallow the tablet with a drink of water. Try to take your doses at the same times of day each day, as this will help you to remember to take the tablets regularly.
- If you forget to take a dose, do not worry, just remember to take the next dose when it is due. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

- If you are a driver, you must stop driving when Ménière's disease is diagnosed. This is because you may have sudden attacks of a spinning sensation (vertigo) with little warning. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) will allow driving again when your symptoms are well controlled. Taking betahistine will not affect your ability to drive.
- If you take betahistine every day it is unlikely to stop all attacks, but it may reduce the number and/or the severity of your attacks. Your doctor may advise a trial of betahistine for 6–12 months to see if it helps to reduce your symptoms. If it does, it can then be continued.
- Some people with Ménière's disease claim their symptoms improve with a low-salt diet, regular exercise, stopping smoking, and cutting out caffeine and alcohol. Although there is little evidence to prove that diet and lifestyle can help, these may be worth trying.
- If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable to take with betahistine. Betahistine may not be as effective if it is taken alongside a medicine containing an antihistamine.

Can betahistine cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with betahistine. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Common betahistine side-effects (these affect fewer than 1 in 10 people)	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling sick (nausea), indigestion	Remember to take your doses of betahistine with food
Headache	Drink plenty of water and ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headaches continue, let your doctor know
Less common side-effects	What can I do if I experience this?
Tummy (abdominal) bloating or discomfort	Taking the tablets with food helps to reduce these side-effects. If they continue or become troublesome, speak with your doctor
Allergic skin reactions such as itching and rash	Use a moisturiser to soothe your skin. If the rash continues or is severe, contact your doctor for advice

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the tablets, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store betahistine

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Serc® 8 mg and 16 mg tablets](#); Mylan Products Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated June 2016.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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