

## Carbamazepine

### (Tegretol<sup>®</sup>, Tegretol Prolonged Release<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

#### **Why has carbamazepine been prescribed for me?**

Carbamazepine may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

#### **How should I take carbamazepine?**

Carbamazepine is available in tablet or liquid form. There is also a "slow release" tablet available. The usual starting dose for adults is 100-200mg once or twice a day. Your doctor may tell you to increase the dose further up to a usual maximum total daily dose of 1200mg. You can take carbamazepine with or without food.

If you miss a dose of carbamazepine take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of carbamazepine seek medical advice straight away about how to restart your medicine.

#### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice include drowsiness, dizziness, rash, headache and stomach upset. Changes in memory, vision or thinking may also happen. Very rarely carbamazepine can cause more serious effects on the skin, blood, liver and heart rhythm. The risk of rash with carbamazepine is much higher in people of Chinese ancestry.

It is important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs of rash, blistering or other skin changes, mouth ulcers, sore throat, fever, unexplained bruising or bleeding, palpitations, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, pain in the joints, muscles or area near the stomach as these may be signs of a more serious problem.

A small number of people are allergic to carbamazepine. You should tell your doctor straight away if you develop signs of this like difficulty breathing, rash, or swelling of the face or lips.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side-effects which cause you concern.

#### **Will I need any special tests?**

Your doctor may arrange for you to have some blood tests before and during treatment with carbamazepine. If this is done, it will be to check that the carbamazepine is not causing any problems to the blood or liver. People of Chinese ancestry may need a genetic blood test (for HLA typing) before starting carbamazepine.

#### **Can I take other medicines with carbamazepine?**

It is very important to tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines interact with carbamazepine including hormonal methods of contraception (see below under special note for women for further information).

Please ask your GP or epilepsy specialist for advice.

#### **Can I drink alcohol while taking carbamazepine?**

You should keep alcohol consumption to a minimum because it is likely to make some of the side effects of carbamazepine worse, like dizziness and tiredness.

### **Special warnings:**

**Allergy:** You should not take carbamazepine if you have an allergy to similar medicines eg. oxcarbazepine (Trileptal®), eslicarbazepine (Zebinix®); or some medicines used to treat depression or nerve pain such as amitriptyline.

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have ever had any medical conditions affecting your heart, liver, blood or bone marrow, or if you have porphyria as carbamazepine may not be suitable for you.

**Different brands:** it is recommended that you keep to the same brand of carbamazepine as there may be slight differences in the different brands available. If you are concerned speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

### **Special note for women.**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Hormonal Methods of Contraception:** Carbamazepine is likely to reduce the effectiveness of hormonal methods of contraception. As a result the dose of the combined oral contraceptive pill may need to be altered, and contraceptive depot injections may need to be administered every ten weeks instead of every twelve weeks. Additional barrier methods of contraception should also be used, at least until there have been three consecutive months without breakthrough bleeding.

Carbamazepine is likely to stop the contraceptive patch, progesterone only contraceptive pill and implant working. These methods are therefore unsuitable if you are also taking carbamazepine.

Carbamazepine also interacts with the emergency contraceptive pill, meaning that higher doses of the emergency contraceptive pill are needed. This is available on prescription only and cannot be purchased from your pharmacy.

Further information is available from your GP, Epilepsy specialist and the organisations Epilepsy Action and the National Society for Epilepsy (website details below).

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:

Epilepsy Action

National Society for Epilepsy

Epilepsy Wales

[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)

[www.epilepsynse.org.uk](http://www.epilepsynse.org.uk)

[www.epilepsy-wales.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy-wales.org.uk)

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## Gabapentin (Neurontin<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has gabapentin been prescribed for me?**

Gabapentin may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take gabapentin?**

Gabapentin is available in tablet or capsule form. The usual starting adult dose is 300mg once on the first day, twice on the second day, then three times a day from day three. Your doctor may tell you to increase the dose further up to a usual maximum total dose of 3 600 mg per day. You can take gabapentin with or without food.

If you miss a dose of gabapentin take it as soon as you remember but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of gabapentin seek medical advice straight away about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side effects?**

Side effects you may notice are dizziness, drowsiness, headache, and stomach upset. Sometimes problems with memory, balance or vision may occur. Very rarely, gabapentin may affect the pancreas or liver. You should tell your doctor straight away if you develop any signs such as yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes, persistent stomach pain and sickness.

Some people may find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy. You should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with gabapentin?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines may affect gabapentin.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking gabapentin?**

Alcohol consumption should be kept to a minimum because it can make some of the side effects of gabapentin worse like dizziness and tiredness.

### **Special warnings:**

**Allergies:** Gabapentin capsules contain lactose. You should not take the capsules if you have lactose intolerance.

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have diabetes as gabapentin can affect blood sugar levels.

### **Special note for women.**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

## Lacosamide (Vimpat<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has lacosamide been prescribed for me?**

Lacosamide is added to your usual anti-epileptic medication in order to further reduce seizures.

### **How should I take lacosamide?**

Lacosamide is available in tablet or liquid form. The usual starting dose is 50mg twice a day. Your doctor may tell you to increase the dose further up to a usual maximum dose of 200mg twice a day. You can take lacosamide with or without food.

If you miss a dose of lacosamide take it as soon as you remember but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of lacosamide seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side effects?**

The most common side effects are dizziness, headache, sickness, constipation and visual disturbances. Shaking, itching and disturbances of thought, memory and balance may also happen.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with lacosamide?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. Of particular importance are medicines taken to prevent heart rhythm disturbance.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking lacosamide?**

Alcohol can make some of the side effects of lacosamide worse eg. dizziness and tiredness. It is therefore not advisable to drink alcohol while on treatment with lacosamide. If you do choose to drink alcohol you should keep consumption to a minimum.

### **Special warnings:**

**Allergies:** You should not take lacosamide tablets if you have a soya or peanut allergy.

Your doctor may arrange for you to have a heart tracing (ECG) to check that your heart conduction (PR interval) is normal, as lacosamide can potentially bring out pre-existing conduction problems.

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have had any heart conditions, as treatment with lacosamide may not be appropriate in this case. The liquid formulation of lacosamide is not suitable for people with phenylketonuria.

**Special note for women:**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk may be slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:

Epilepsy Action

National Society for Epilepsy

Epilepsy Wales

Welsh Epilepsy Unit (specialist nurse)

[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)

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[www.epilepsy-wales.co.uk](http://www.epilepsy-wales.co.uk)

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## Lamotrigine (Lamictal<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has lamotrigine been prescribed for me?**

Lamotrigine may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take lamotrigine?**

Lamotrigine is available in tablet form (including dispersible and chewable tablets). The starting dose for adults depends on whether you take other medicines which interact with lamotrigine. Starting doses vary from 12.5mg to 50mg daily. This may then be increased by your doctor. You can take lamotrigine with or without food. If you miss a dose of lamotrigine take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of lamotrigine seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice include drowsiness, dizziness, headache and stomach upset. Changes in memory, vision, co-ordination or thinking may also happen. Lamotrigine may also cause more serious effects on the skin, blood and liver. It is important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs of rash, blistering or other skin changes, mouth ulcers, sore throat, fever, unexplained bruising or bleeding, or yellowing of the whites of the eyes as these may be signs of a more serious problem.

A small number of people are allergic to lamotrigine. You should tell your doctor straight away if you develop signs such as high temperature, or swelling of the face, glands or lips.

Mood changes including depression have been reported as a side effect, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with lamotrigine?**

Lamotrigine is known to interact with some other medicines including some other anti-epileptic medicines and the oral contraceptive pill. Lamotrigine may reduce the effectiveness of the progesterone-only contraceptive pill (Mini-Pill) and so increase the risk of pregnancy. There should not be a problem with the effectiveness of the combined oral contraceptive pill. Also, the combined oral contraceptive pill may lower the amount of lamotrigine in the blood.

It is very important to tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking lamotrigine?**

Alcohol can make some of the side effects of lamotrigine worse like dizziness and tiredness. If you drink alcohol, you should keep consumption to a minimum.

### **Special warnings:**

**Allergy:** You should not take lamotrigine tablets if you have lactose intolerance. The chewable or dispersible tablets do not contain lactose.

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have ever had any medical conditions affecting your kidney or if any other medicines have ever caused you to have a skin rash as lamotrigine may not be suitable for you.

### **Special note for women:**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. Even in pregnancies where mothers take no medications there is a small risk that the baby will have a malformation. The risk may be slightly higher if you take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5 mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby. If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**



## Levetiracetam

(Keppra<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has levetiracetam been prescribed for me?**

Levetiracetam may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take levetiracetam?**

Levetiracetam is available in tablet or liquid form. The usual starting adult dose is 250-500mg twice a day. This may then be increased by your doctor up to a usual maximum dose of 1500mg twice a day. You can take levetiracetam with or without food. If you miss a dose of levetiracetam take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of levetiracetam seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice are dizziness, headache, drowsiness, sickness, diarrhoea, and weight gain. Sometimes trembling, rash, muscle aches, changes in memory, vision or balance may also happen. Rarely increases in seizure frequency, blood or liver disorders may occur. Mood changes including irritability, personality change and depression have also been reported as a side-effect, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side-effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with levetiracetam?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking levetiracetam?**

The effect of alcohol on levetiracetam is not known. You should try to keep alcohol consumption to a minimum while on treatment with levetiracetam.

### **Special note for women:**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in pregnancies of mothers without epilepsy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant **do not stop taking your medication** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:

Epilepsy Action

National Society for Epilepsy

Epilepsy Wales

Welsh Epilepsy Unit (specialist nurse)

[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)

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## Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has oxcarbazepine been prescribed for me?**

Oxcarbazepine may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take oxcarbazepine?**

Oxcarbazepine is available in tablet or liquid form. The usual starting adult dose is 300mg twice a day. Your doctor may tell you to increase the dose further up to a usual maximum total daily dose of 2,400mg per day. You can take oxcarbazepine with or without food.

If you miss a dose of oxcarbazepine take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of oxcarbazepine seek medical advice straight away about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice include drowsiness, dizziness, rash, headache and stomach upset. Changes in mood, memory, vision or thinking may also happen.

Very rarely, oxcarbazepine can cause more serious effects on the skin, blood, liver and heart rhythm. It is important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs such as rash, blistering or other skin changes, mouth ulcers, sore throat, fever, unexplained bruising or bleeding, palpitations, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, or any pain in the joints, muscles or area near the stomach.

A small number of people are allergic to oxcarbazepine. You should tell your doctor straight away if you develop signs like difficulty breathing, rash or swelling of the face or lips.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Will I need any special tests?**

Your doctor will arrange for you to have some blood tests before and during treatment with oxcarbazepine. If this is done, it is to check that the medicine is not causing any problems to the blood or liver.

### **Can I take other medicines with oxcarbazepine?**

It is very important to tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines interact with oxcarbazepine including hormonal methods of contraception (see below under special note for women for further information).

Please ask your GP or epilepsy specialist for advice.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking oxcarbazepine?**

The manufacturer advises that alcohol should be avoided if possible because it can make some of the side effects of oxcarbazepine worse like dizziness and tiredness. If you do choose to drink alcohol it would be advisable to keep consumption to a minimum.

### **Special warnings:**

**Allergy:** You should not take oxcarbazepine if you have an allergy to similar medicines like carbamazepine (Tegretol®), and eslicarbazepine (Zebinix®); or some medicines used to treat depression or nerve pain such as amitriptyline.

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have ever had any medical conditions affecting your heart, liver, blood or bone marrow or if you have porphyria as oxcarbazepine may not be suitable for you.

### **Special note for women.**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Hormonal Methods of Contraception:** Oxcarbazepine is likely to reduce the effectiveness of hormonal methods of contraception. As a result the dose of the combined oral contraceptive pill may need to be altered, and contraceptive depot injections may need to be administered every ten weeks instead of every twelve weeks. Additional barrier methods of contraception should also be used, at least until there have been three consecutive months without breakthrough bleeding.

Oxcarbazepine is likely to stop the contraceptive patch, progesterone only contraceptive pill and implant working. These methods are therefore unsuitable if you are also taking oxcarbazepine.

Oxcarbazepine also interacts with the emergency contraceptive pill, meaning that higher doses of the emergency contraceptive pill are needed. This is available on prescription only and cannot be purchased from your pharmacy.

Further information is available from your GP, Epilepsy specialist and the organisations Epilepsy Action and the National Society for Epilepsy (website details below).

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

## Phenytoin (Epanutin<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has phenytoin been prescribed for me?**

Phenytoin may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take phenytoin?**

Phenytoin is available in tablet, capsule and liquid form. The usual starting adult dose is 300mg a day. After two to four weeks your doctor may arrange for you to have a blood test to check that you have the right amount of phenytoin in your blood. You can take phenytoin with or without food.

If you miss a dose of phenytoin take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of phenytoin seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice include dizziness, sickness, difficulty sleeping and constipation. Sometimes gum enlargement, acne, increased hair growth and coarsening of the skin may also happen. Bone thinning occasionally happens but can be prevented by making sure you have enough vitamin D. Your doctor may prescribe a supplement for you.

Rarely phenytoin can cause more serious effects on the skin, blood and liver. It is important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs of rash or blistering of the skin, fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers, unexplained bruising or bleeding, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, or pain affecting the abdomen (area around the stomach).

If the level of phenytoin in your blood becomes too high you may develop unusual eye movements, double vision, slurred speech and confusion. Tell your doctor straight away if you have any of these symptoms.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Will I need any special tests?**

Your doctor may arrange for you to have some blood tests before and during treatment with phenytoin. If this is done it will be to check that the dose of phenytoin is right for you and that the medicine is not causing any problems to the blood or liver.

### **Can I take other medicines with phenytoin?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines interact with phenytoin including warfarin and hormonal methods of contraception (see below under special note for women for further information). Please ask your GP or epilepsy specialist for advice.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking phenytoin?**

Alcohol can make some of the side effects of phenytoin worse, like dizziness and drowsiness. It can also change the amount of phenytoin in your blood. It is best to avoid alcohol while taking phenytoin.

### **Special warnings:**

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have porphyria, lactose intolerance or have ever suffered with liver problems as phenytoin may not be suitable for you.

**Different brands:** it is recommended that you keep to the same brand of phenytoin as there may be slight differences in the different brands available. If you are concerned speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

### **Special note for women.**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Hormonal Methods of Contraception:** Phenytoin is likely to reduce the effectiveness of hormonal methods of contraception. As a result the dose of the combined oral contraceptive pill may need to be altered, and contraceptive depot injections may need to be administered every ten weeks instead of every twelve weeks. Additional barrier methods of contraception should also be used, at least until there have been three consecutive months without breakthrough bleeding.

Phenytoin is likely to stop the contraceptive patch, progesterone only contraceptive pill and implant working. These methods are therefore unsuitable if you are also taking phenytoin.

Phenytoin also interacts with the emergency contraceptive pill, meaning that higher doses of the emergency contraceptive pill are needed. This is available on prescription only and cannot be purchased from your pharmacy.

It is important to note that if phenytoin is stopped the effect it has on hormonal methods of contraception will continue for some weeks.

Further information is available from your GP, Epilepsy specialist and the organisations Epilepsy Action and the National Society for Epilepsy (website details below).

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:

Epilepsy Action

National Society for Epilepsy

Epilepsy Wales

Welsh Epilepsy Unit (specialist nurse)

[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)

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## Pregabalin

(Lyrice<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has pregabalin been prescribed for me?**

Pregabalin added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to further reduce seizures.

### **How should I take pregabalin?**

Pregabalin is available in capsule form. The usual starting adult dose is 25mg twice a day. This may be increased further as directed by your doctor up to a usual maximum total dose of 300mg twice a day. You can take pregabalin with or without food. If you miss a dose of pregabalin take it as soon as you remember but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of pregabalin seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side effects?**

Side effects you may notice are dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth and stomach upset. Sometimes changes in your memory and balance or vision may also happen. A small number of people are allergic to pregabalin. Tell your doctor straight away if you develop a rash, face swelling or difficulty breathing.

Very rarely, pregabalin may affect the pancreas or kidney. You should tell your doctor straight away if you develop persistent stomach pain and sickness or a noticeable decrease in the amount of urine you pass.

Depression has also been reported as a side effect, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with pregabalin?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking pregabalin?**

You should try to keep alcohol consumption to a minimum while on treatment with pregabalin.

### **Special Warnings**

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have diabetes as pregabalin can affect blood sugar levels.

### **Special note for women:**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk may be slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:  
Epilepsy Action  
National Society for Epilepsy  
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Welsh Epilepsy Unit (specialist nurse)

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**September 2010**

# Sodium Valproate

## (Epilim<sup>®</sup>, Episenta<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has sodium valproate been prescribed for me?**

Sodium valproate can be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take sodium valproate?**

Sodium valproate is available in tablet, capsule, liquid or sachet form. The usual starting adult dose is 300 mg twice a day. Your doctor may tell you to increase the dose further up to a usual maximum total daily dose of 2,500 mg. You can take sodium valproate with or without food.

If you miss a dose of sodium valproate take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of sodium valproate seek medical advice straight away about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice include stomach upset or irritation (can be helped by taking after food), hair loss, tremor and weight gain.

Very rarely sodium valproate can cause more serious effects on the skin, blood, liver and pancreas. It is important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs of rash or blistering of the skin, fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers, unexplained bruising or bleeding, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes or pain affecting the back or abdomen (area around the stomach).

Sodium valproate affects the level of ammonia in the blood of some people. Signs of this include a feeling of sickness, lethargy or problems with your balance. You should tell your doctor if you think this may be affecting you.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Will I need any special tests?**

Your doctor may sometimes arrange for you to have some blood tests before and during treatment with sodium valproate. If this is done it will be to check that the medicine is not causing any problems to the blood or liver.

### **Can I take other medicines with sodium valproate?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines interact with sodium valproate including **warfarin**.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking sodium valproate?**

You may find that the effects of alcohol are stronger while you are taking sodium valproate, because it slows down the digestion of alcohol in the liver. If you choose to drink alcohol it is advisable to keep consumption to a minimum.



### **Special warnings:**

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have porphyria or have ever suffered with liver problems as sodium valproate may not be suitable for you.

**Different brands:** it is recommended that you keep to the same brand of sodium valproate as there may be slight differences in the different brands available. If you are concerned speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

### **Special note for women.**

**Pregnancy:** Women who are of child-bearing age and taking sodium valproate must discuss their medication carefully with their specialist before trying to become pregnant. Current advice is that women who are planning a pregnancy should take sodium valproate only if there is no other alternative. If sodium valproate is continued through pregnancy it should be at the lowest dose effective in controlling seizures. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is higher if you take sodium valproate during pregnancy. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:

Epilepsy Action

National Society for Epilepsy

Epilepsy Wales

Welsh Epilepsy Unit (specialist nurse)

[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)

[www.epilepsynse.org.uk](http://www.epilepsynse.org.uk)

[www.epilepsy-wales.co.uk](http://www.epilepsy-wales.co.uk)

029 20745066

**September 2010**

## Tiagabine (Gabitril<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has tiagabine been prescribed for me?**

Tiagabine is added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to further reduce seizures.

### **How should I take tiagabine?**

Tiagabine is available in tablet form. The usual starting adult dose is 5 - 10 mg twice a day. This may then be increased by your doctor. You should take tiagabine with a glass of water and food.

If you miss a dose of tiagabine take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of tiagabine seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Mild side-effects are more common in the first month, and tend to reduce as time goes by. You may notice dizziness, tiredness, nervousness, diarrhoea, difficulty concentrating or tremor.

Other less common effects include confusion, bruising and changes to your vision. You should tell your doctor if you notice any signs of these.

Some people find they start to feel depressed or experience mood changes while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with tiagabine?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines may interact with tiagabine.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking tiagabine?**

Alcohol can make some of the side effects of tiagabine worse like dizziness and drowsiness. If you drink alcohol, it is advisable to keep consumption to a minimum.

### **Special warnings:**

**Allergies:** You should not take tiagabine tablets if you have lactose intolerance.

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have any conditions affecting the liver as tiagabine may not be suitable for you

### **Special note for women:**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to

become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:  
Epilepsy Action  
National Society for Epilepsy  
Epilepsy Wales  
Welsh Epilepsy Unit (specialist nurse)

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**September 2010**

# Topiramate

## (Topamax<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has topiramate been prescribed for me?**

Topiramate may be used alone or added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to reduce seizures.

### **How should I take topiramate?**

Topiramate is available in tablet form or as sprinkle capsules which may be opened and the contents sprinkled on food. The usual starting adult dose is 25mg once a day at night. Your doctor may tell you to increase the dose up to a usual maximum of 250mg twice a day. You can take topiramate with or without food.

If you miss a dose of topiramate take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of topiramate seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects you may notice include drowsiness, dizziness, weight loss, reduced sweating, tingling sensation or changes in mood, memory or thinking.

Very rarely topiramate can cause more serious effects on the skin, blood, heart, eye including glaucoma, and kidney including kidney stones. Heat-stroke is also a rare side-effect. It's important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs of eye pain, rash, fever, persistent sore throat or mouth ulcers, unexplained bruising or bleeding, pain affecting the back or abdomen, or pain on passing urine.

To help prevent side-effects like heat-stroke and kidney stones forming it is important to make sure you stay well-hydrated by drinking enough water.

You should tell your doctor if you have headaches, drowsiness, reduced appetite and breathlessness as this may mean a lower than normal level of bicarbonate in your blood. This can easily be treated by your doctor.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with topiramate?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines interact with topiramate including hormonal methods of contraception which may be less effective when taken with topiramate. Please ask your GP or epilepsy specialist for advice.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking topiramate?**

The manufacturer advises you should not drink alcohol while you are taking topiramate as it is unclear whether alcohol will affect the medicine. Some side effects like dizziness and drowsiness may be made worse by alcohol. If you do choose to drink alcohol it would be advisable to keep consumption to a minimum.

### **Special warnings:**

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have ever had any medical conditions affecting your kidney, eyes (especially glaucoma), blood or body fluid, or if you have porphyria or intolerance of sucrose or lactose as topiramate may not be suitable for you.

### **Special note for women.**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**

Further information available from:

Epilepsy Action

National Society for Epilepsy

Epilepsy Wales

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[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)

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029 20745066

**September 2010**

## Zonisamide (Zonegran<sup>®</sup>)

*This information is intended to supplement and not replace that provided by the medicine's manufacturer.*

### **Why has zonisamide been prescribed for me?**

Zonisamide is added to your usual anti-epileptic medication to further reduce seizures.

### **How should I take zonisamide?**

Zonisamide is available in capsule form. The usual starting adult dose is 25 mg twice a day. This may be increased by your doctor up to a usual maximum dose of 500 mg daily. You can take zonisamide with or without food.

If you miss a dose of zonisamide take it as soon as you remember, but if this is at a time close to your next dose, don't take the missed dose and continue with the next dose as normal. If you miss several doses of zonisamide seek medical advice about how to restart your medicine.

### **What are the possible side-effects?**

Mild side-effects are more common in the first month, and tend to reduce as time goes by. You may notice drowsiness or changes in mood, memory or vision. Allergic reactions affect about 5% of people who take zonisamide.

Very rarely zonisamide may cause more serious effects on the skin, blood, liver, pancreas, muscles and kidney including kidney stones. Heat-stroke and weight loss may also rarely occur. It's important to tell your doctor straight away if you have any signs of allergy, rash, fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers, unexplained bruising or bleeding, back or abdominal pain, muscle pain or weakness.

To help prevent side-effects like heat-stroke and kidney stones forming it is important to make sure you stay well-hydrated by drinking enough water and keep cool in warm weather.

You should tell your doctor if you have headaches, drowsiness, reduced appetite and breathlessness as this may mean a lower than normal level of bicarbonate in your blood which can be treated by your doctor.

Some people find they start to feel depressed while taking medicines for epilepsy, you should tell your doctor if you find you are affected by this or any other side effects which cause you concern.

### **Can I take other medicines with zonisamide?**

You should tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines including those you may have purchased over the counter and alternative medicines. This is because some medicines may interact with zonisamide.

### **Can I drink alcohol while taking zonisamide?**

Alcohol can make some of the side effects of zonisamide worse like dizziness and drowsiness. If you drink alcohol, it is advisable to keep consumption to a minimum.

### **Special warnings:**

**Other medical conditions:** tell your doctor if you have porphyria, an allergy to sulphonamides or any medical conditions affecting your kidney, blood or body fluid as zonisamide may not be suitable for you.

### **Special note for women:**

**Pregnancy:** It is important to discuss your anti-epileptic medication with your epilepsy healthcare professional if you are thinking of becoming pregnant. There is a small risk in any pregnancy that the baby will have a malformation. The risk is slightly higher if you have epilepsy or take anti-epileptic medicines. Taking folic acid at a dose of 5mg daily (prescribed by your doctor) may help to reduce the risk. Discussion with your epilepsy specialist before you try to become pregnant will help decide on the best way to control your seizures during pregnancy, with the least risk to the baby.

If you should unexpectedly become pregnant ***do not stop taking your medication*** as this puts both the health of yourself and your baby at risk. Seek the advice of your epilepsy specialist urgently.

**Please do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's advice as this may cause seizures.**