

Lamotrigine (also called Lamictal)

Lamotrigine is a medicine or drug that is used in epilepsy to control a number of different seizures or convulsions (fits):

- Generalised tonic-clonic seizures
- Absences
- Myoclonic or jerk seizures
- Focal or partial seizures

It is also used to treat pain, e.g. neuralgia headaches and some psychiatric symptoms

The medicine is available as **either**

- yellow tablets, each tablet containing either 25, 50, 100 or 200 mg of Lamotrigine. (There are other coloured brands available).

or

- white dispersible tablets (5, 25 or 100 mg per tablet) which can be dissolved in water (or blackcurrant flavoured juice) and drunk or can be chewed.

How do I use it?

- The medicine is usually given twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening.
- The tablets should be swallowed whole or can be chewed. They can be taken with any drink or food. They are not flavoured so do not taste great if chewed
- The dispersible tablets dissolve in water, or may be crushed on to a spoon and taken with some juice or jam or honey. They can also be chewed.
- If a dose of the medicine is forgotten, and you remember up to 4 hours after missing the dose, give the forgotten dose when you can.
- If you remember only at or near the time the next dose is due, just give your child the usual dose. **Do not** give any extra Lamotrigine.
- If your child vomits within 15 minutes of taking a dose, give the dose again. If your child vomits after 15 minutes after taking the dose, **do not** give it again.

It is very important to increase the dosage gradually as instructed by your doctor.

The medicine is at the correct dosage when your child is free of seizures or convulsions (fits) and has no side effects. There is usually no need to routinely measure the level of medicine in the blood. Occasionally it is useful to measure the level in the blood, e.g. when a high dose is not working.

If your child has been taking the medicine regularly, **do not stop it suddenly** as this could bring on a fit or convulsion.

Keep a seizure diary if you can and remember to always bring all the medicines with you to clinic appointments.

Use with other medicines?

Paracetamol (Calpol), antibiotics and most other medicines or drugs can be safely taken with Lamotrigine.

Valproate (Epilim, another antiepileptic drug) increases the levels of Lamotrigine so you will need to take less Lamotrigine if given with Valproate.

Some other antiepileptic drugs, e.g. Carbamazepine (Tegretol), lower Lamotrigine levels.

Lamotrigine and contraception?

Lamotrigine may reduce the effectiveness of the oral contraceptive pill. There is recent evidence that seizure control may worsen in some women when starting on the combined oral contraceptive pill and that side effects associated with Lamotrigine can increase when women using Lamotrigine discontinue the oral contraceptive. Your Lamotrigine dose may need to be increased when starting on oral contraception & likewise, for women stopping the pill, the daily dose of Lamotrigine may need to be reduced. Therefore you should ask your doctor or epilepsy nurse before starting or stopping the oral contraceptive. A second method of contraception should be used for 2-3 months when first starting Lamotrigine with an oral contraceptive. If you have any bleeding

between periods please contact the epilepsy nurses for further advice.

What are the common side-effects?

Few side effects have been reported with Lamotrigine and most are minor and not dangerous.

1. An allergic skin rash occurs in about 10% of patients on Lamotrigine. The rash is more likely to develop if the child is also taking Sodium Valproate (Epilim), another antiepileptic drug, or if the dose is increased quickly. The rash develops within 8 weeks of starting treatment and usually appears quickly and looks like a measles rash, affecting the body, face, mouth legs and arms. There may also be a fever (high temperature) and a feeling of being unwell. If a rash does develop, you should tell your doctor or nurse (GP or hospital) **immediately**.
2. Your child may show signs of irritability, aggressiveness and signs of confusion.
3. Drowsiness is rarely seen and usually only as the medicine is being started. If excessive sleepiness or drowsiness does not go away, you should contact your doctor.
4. Dizziness or tremor (shakiness) or unsteadiness and loss of coordination or blurring of vision is uncommon. It can happen when just starting. It may develop later if the dose is too much for the child. Again, tell your doctor if the dizziness does not go away.

Tell your doctor or nurse (hospital or GP) if you experience any side effects not mentioned above.

Generic lamotrigine

Lamotrigine is now 'off-patent' so you may get tablets or capsules or liquid Lamotrigine that looks different to the "Lamictal" you are used to. Although many people, including some doctors and nurses worry about this, there should not be any problems if you stay on the

same mg dose each day. The different versions of Lamotrigine should contain the same amount of active ingredient. However if you suspect it is not working so well or is causing side effects do tell your doctor or specialist nurse.

For further information please refer to the manufacture's patient information leaflet.