
Department of Neurosciences

Phenobarbitone drug information

Phenobarbitone is one of the oldest drugs used for the treatment of epilepsy. It helps reduce seizure frequency and severity and in a lot of cases stops seizures altogether. It is one of the most prescribed antiepileptic drugs World wide. It is available in 15mg, 30mg and 60mg tablets. It is also available in a syrup containing 15mg/ml. An injectable formulation is available for use in hospital settings. We tend to use it less often than some newer drugs because it has a reputation for causing sedative side-effects but it remains extremely useful.

Drug brand names

- Phenobarbitone
- Phenobarbital

Uses

Phenobarbitone helps reduce seizure frequency and severity and in a lot of cases stops seizures altogether.

Side effects

- The most important side effects are changes in behaviour particularly in children, changes in thinking and memory.
- Some people may experience sleepiness, slowness of body movements especially when starting treatment or if the dose is too high.
- When Phenobarbitone is used in the long term, the following are the other side effects that may develop; coarsening of facial features, disturbance in eye movement, unsteady walking and decreased sex drive.
- Phenobarbital can cause Vitamin D deficiency leading to osteomalacia and rickets.
- Other medically serious side effects are rare and may affect the skin, blood and liver. Blood tests will be performed where appropriate.

In the event of any of these side effects, contact the epilepsy nurse (contact details are at the end of the leaflet), or your GP.

Contraception

Phenobarbitone reduces the amount of the oral contraceptive pill in your body so that a higher dose pill is required. Even then, contraception may be slightly less effective, especially if there is breakthrough bleeding between periods. You should consider also using a barrier method, such as condoms until the problem gets rectified.

Phenobarbitone does not affect the three month contraceptive injection and other methods such as the Mirena Coil.

Pregnancy

Phenobarbitone may have similar effects on a baby to drinking too much alcohol during pregnancy. For example, the baby may have a slow growth rate in the womb and after birth, mental under development and heart defects have been reported. Other problems associated with children born of mothers taking Phenobarbitone include facial abnormalities such as hare lip, cleft palate. Ask to see your specialist to discuss the best treatment before you conceive. Once you are pregnant, it is too late. We recommend you take folic acid 5mg daily from at least eight weeks prior to conception until at least 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Drug interactions

Phenobarbitone affects the function of various drugs including other antiepileptic drugs. The extent of this effect varies from person to person depending on genetic factors. For any other medication you are prescribed or buy over the counter, always check with your doctor or pharmacist if there are any interactions with these and Phenobarbitone.

Other useful information

- Try to take the medicine at the same time every day.
- Keep a record of your seizures when you start any new medication. This will help determine future drug dosages.
- If you have any problems as you start taking Phenobarbitone, please contact your GP, who may be able to advise you or may contact the hospital specialist if necessary.
- Do not stop taking Phenobarbitone suddenly as this can cause withdrawal seizures. Always withdraw it slowly under supervision and following discussion with your doctor or epilepsy specialist nurse.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember but do not take two doses at the same time or within six hours of each other.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the epilepsy nurse specialist on 01223 217992.

The information on this leaflet is not exhaustive. Please refer to the patient information leaflet prepared by the manufacturer of your drug which can be found in the medicine packaging.



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem Informacji Pacjenta (Patient Information) pod numerem telefonu: 01223 216032 lub pod adresem patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Se precisar desta informação noutra língua, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio, por favor peça ao departamento que contacte a secção de Informação aos Doentes (Patient Information) pelo telefone 01223 216032 ou através do e-mail patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Arabic

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بالأحرف الكبيرة أو بشكل شريط صوتي، يمكنك أن تطلب من القسم الاتصال بمعلومات المريض على الرقم: 01223216032 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

如您需以另一語言版本、特大字體或錄音形式索取本資料，請要求部門聯絡病人諮詢服務：電話 01223 216032，電郵地址 patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

Eğer bu bilgileri başka bir dilde veya büyük baskılı veya sesli olarak isterseniz, lütfen bulunduğunuz bölümdeki görevlilere söyleyin Hasta Bilgilendirme servisini arasinlar: 01223 216032 veya patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر زبان میں، بڑے الفاظ میں یا آڈیو طریقہ سے درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس شعبہ سے پیشمنٹ انفارمیشن سے ذریعہ رابطہ کرنے کی درخواست کریں: 01223 216032 یا patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও রেকর্ডিং পোতে চান তাহলে 'প্যাশেন্ট ইনফরমেশান' এর সঙ্গে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করে বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য ডিপার্টমেন্টটিতে অনুরোধ জানান।

Document history

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