

Lamotrigine (Lamictal)

Why is this medication prescribed?

- Lamotrigine is most commonly used in the management of epilepsy.
- Lamotrigine is also used as a mood stabilizer when treating acute bipolar depression or for ongoing management of bipolar disorder.
- Lamotrigine can be used to treat chronic pain by blocking sodium channels. It is most commonly used to treat central post-stroke pain but may be used to manage nerve pain resulting from a spinal cord injury or trigeminal neuralgia (a condition affecting the trigeminal nerve, which is a nerve carrying sensation from your face to your brain).

How should this medication be used?

- Lamotrigine can be taken with or without food and comes as a 25 mg, 50 mg and 150 mg tablet.
- Lamotrigine is usually started as 25 mg at night and is gradually increased in 25 to 50 mg/day increments each week to a target dose of 100 mg twice daily.
- When used for pain management, lamotrigine is **NOT** a "pain killer" to be taken whenever pain becomes severe or for managing minor aches and pains. It should be **taken on a consistent basis** according to your doctor's orders to help you control long-term pain.
- Do **NOT** abruptly stop taking lamotrigine without talking to your doctor. If for some reason lamotrigine is no longer needed, your doctor will reduce your dose gradually.

When does this medication start to work?

As the lamotrigine dose is slowly adjusted to improve tolerability, it may take several weeks before you notice the benefits of this medication.

What special precautions should I follow?

- Before using lamotrigine tell your doctor if you have any of the following health issues:
 - Allergies or rash reactions to any medications
 - Are pregnant or breastfeeding or this situation is likely in the near future
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of the medications you take (prescription, non-prescription, herbals, over-the-counter products, etc.) so drug interactions can be minimized.
 - Lamotrigine may reduce the effectiveness of certain oral contraceptives, which may necessitate the use of a second contraceptive option, such as condoms.
- It is best to wait until your body adjusts to this new medication or a dose change before driving or operating machinery.
- If alcohol is used with lamotrigine it can result in more drowsiness. Avoid alcohol when first starting lamotrigine and your body is adjusting to the new medication.

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What should I do if I forget a dose?

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

What are the possible side effects of this medication?

The most common dose-related side effects include:

- Nausea/vomiting
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Daytime drowsiness
- Ataxia, which is a lack of muscle control or coordination of voluntary movements such as walking or picking up objects. Ataxia can affect various movements and create difficulties with speech, eye movement and swallowing.

Serious skin rashes can happen with lamotrigine use. The risk of these rashes in clinical trials was 0.3% (3/1000) in adults. A higher risk of skin rash has been observed when the dose has been adjusted too quickly. The majority of all cases of rash connected with lamotrigine have happened within 2 to 8 weeks of starting lamotrigine therapy. The risk of rash with lamotrigine is approximately three to four times higher in patients with a history of allergy or rash to other anti-seizure medications. **If you develop a rash while taking lamotrigine, promptly stop taking lamotrigine and contact your health care provider.**

What storage conditions are needed for this medication?

- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children.
- Store at room temperature, away from excess heat/moisture (not in the kitchen or bathroom).
- If lamotrigine is stopped by your doctor, return any remaining supply to your community pharmacist for proper medication disposal.