

**Information for Adult Patients who are Prescribed  
Lamotrigine  
For the Treatment of Pain**



This information is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. We advise you to read the manufacturer's information for patients, which your pharmacist will supply with your medicine. Please keep all medicines away from children, vulnerable adults or pets.

## **Why have I been prescribed lamotrigine?**

Lamotrigine is used to treat some types of persistent pain. It is especially good for nerve pain, such as burning, shooting or stabbing pain.

Lamotrigine belongs to the anticonvulsant group of medications, which are also used to treat epilepsy and other conditions.

You may notice that information from the manufacturer will not mention pain. Although lamotrigine is not licensed for the treatment of pain, it has been shown to be helpful in the management of certain types of pain. You are on this medicine to treat your pain.

## **How does lamotrigine work?**

Lamotrigine works by changing the way that nerves send messages to your brain. If the messages are reduced, then the pain will be reduced.

## **How long will it take to work?**

Every patient is different. You may notice some initial benefit within a few days, however it may take 2 - 4 weeks before you feel any pain relief. It may take longer (up to 2 months) to get to the right dose for you and to allow the medicine to build up in your body.

Lamotrigine does not work for everyone. If you do not feel any improvement in your pain after 6 to 8 weeks, do not suddenly stop taking the tablets but speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

## **What should I expect?**

It is rarely possible to help long-term pain completely by using medicines alone. This is because long-term pain arises through many different mechanisms, and most medicines only work for one of these.

In trials, most medicines for long-term pain provide on average a 30 % reduction in pain. Some pains do not seem to respond to any painkilling medicines.

Medicines work best if you combine them with other ways of managing symptoms such as regular activity and exercise and doing things that are satisfying or enjoyable, such as work, study and social activities. Setting goals to help improve your life is an important way to see if these medicines are helping.

You should discuss, with your doctor, what you expect from the treatment

## **When should I take it?**

Normally the starting dose is small and you usually take it at night. You can gradually increase your dose. It is important to take lamotrigine regularly, as prescribed for it to work properly. It is not a medication that you should use on an 'as required' basis.

Usually you start on a small dose of lamotrigine and increase this slowly to find the best dose for you. You and your healthcare professional will decide how quickly you increase your dose.

Below is a guide on how to increase your medicine. You may increase it more slowly if you feel you are getting side effects, for example by going back a step for an extra week before increasing again. You can stay on a lower dose if you are getting good pain relief (you don't have to keep increasing the dose if you do not need to).

	<b>Night</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	25mg
<b>Step 2</b>	50mg
<b>Step 3</b>	75mg

## **How do I take lamotrigine?**

You should swallow the tablets whole with a glass of water.  
You may take lamotrigine before or after food.

## **What if I forget or miss a dose?**

Take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose and take the next dose as normal. **Do not take two doses at the same time.**

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

We advise you to read the information leaflet that is included with your medication. Listed below are some side effects associated with lamotrigine use. The full list of potential side effects can be found in the leaflet that comes with the medication.

<b>Very Common</b> May affect more than 1 in 10 people	<b>Common</b> May affect up to 1 in 10 people
Headache	Sleepiness
Skin rash	Tiredness Difficulty sleeping Dizziness Diarrhoea Agitation Aggression or irritability Tremors or shaking Dry mouth Feeling sick Back or joint pain

Generally side effects are worse after starting lamotrigine or

increasing the dose. It is important to persist in taking lamotrigine as these side effects are usually mild and will wear off after several days.

Drowsiness is usually temporary. If you feel drowsy, you should not drive or operate machinery.

Drowsiness may occur as you increase your dose. If you feel especially drowsy in the morning it may help to take this medicine earlier in the evening.

The risk of drowsiness may increase if you are taking other medicines for pain such as other anticonvulsant medications, antidepressants or morphine like medicines.

If you have side effects that are severe, or last for more than a few days, you should get advice from your GP, Community Pharmacist or **NHS 24 on 111**.

**Stop this medicine immediately if you experience any of the following and contact your GP as soon as possible:**

- **A widespread rash with blisters and peeling skin**
- **Sore mouth or red or swollen eyes**
- **High temperature**
- **Swelling around your face or swollen glands in your neck, armpit or groin**
- **Unexpected bleeding or bruising**
- **A sore throat or more infections (such as colds) than usual**

Also, you can help make sure medicines remain as safe as possible by reporting any unwanted side-effects via the internet at

**[www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)**

alternatively you can call **Freephone 0808 100 3352**  
(available between 10am-2pm Monday – Friday).

## **Can I take lamotrigine long-term?**

Yes, if it helps. You may wish to reduce treatment every so often, to check if your pain is still a problem. This should be done with the advice of your GP or pain clinic, gradually reducing your medication over a period of time.

## **Can I drive?**

Please see the note above. If you experience drowsiness you should not drive. Remember, you are responsible for deciding whether you are fit to drive.

## **Can I drink alcohol?**

Alcohol and lamotrigine together cause sleepiness and poor concentration. You should avoid alcohol completely when you first start taking lamotrigine or when you increase your dose.

You should also avoid alcohol if you are going to drive or operate machinery.

Once you are on a stable dose, you should be able to drink modest amounts of alcohol, **but only if the drowsiness has stopped**. You must take care with alcohol if you are also prescribed other medications that can cause sleepiness and poor concentration.

## **What should I tell the doctor?**

- If you are allergic to any medicines.
- If you are taking any other medicines or herbal medicines.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the future.
- If you have a kidney problem.
- If you have Parkinson's disease.
- If you have or have had a history of excessive alcohol use, recreational drug use or addiction to prescribed or over-the-counter medicines.

## **What if I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant?**

This medicine may cause birth defects in babies if taken during pregnancy. Women of childbearing age must use appropriate contraception. However lamotrigine may affect oral contraception.

If you are on oral contraception or plan to start it, please check with your GP that you are on a correct dose before you start lamotrigine.

## **What if I want to stop taking lamotrigine?**

Do not stop taking lamotrigine suddenly as you might experience withdrawal symptoms. Speak to your healthcare professional (doctor, pharmacist, nurse) who will be able to give you advice about your medication.

However if you experience side effects that are troublesome (as described in the “stop this medication immediately” section above) and you have only taken this medicine for a few days or weeks, you can usually stop it suddenly without withdrawal symptoms.

## **Remember!**

- **Don't run out of medicine.**
- **Ask for a repeat prescription before your medicine is finished.**
- **If you have any questions about this medicine please contact your GP or community pharmacist.**

For more information about managing chronic pain, please see [www.paindata.org](http://www.paindata.org)

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