Department of Neurosciences

Ethosuximide drug information
For
- Patients
- Staff

Drug/brand names
- Ethosuximide
- Emeside
- Zarontin

Formulation
It is available in the form of a 250mg capsule and a syrup containing 250mg in every measure of 5ml.

Uses
Ethosuximide is an antiepileptic drug used to reduce seizure frequency and severity. It is used in absence seizures, and rarely for myoclonic or tonic seizures.

Side effects (the list of side effects is not exhaustive, please refer to product literature for full list)
Common side effects include:
- Weight loss, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal discomfort and hiccups. These side effects are common at first, but will often improve as treatment continues

Less commonly:
- Headache, drowsiness or difficulty sleeping
- Unsteadiness in walking, movement problems or dizziness
- Feeling of euphoria or irritability, aggression and difficulty concentrating

Rarely:
- Tongue swelling
- Depression, and general mood and behavioural changes occur. All antiepileptic medication can cause feelings of depression, or severe mood changes. If you experience any of these please contact your specialist.
- Rash
- Changes to vision
- Vaginal bleeding
- Gingival hypertrophy (overgrowth of the gums)
- Medically serious side effects are rare, however ethosuximide can affect the blood. Routine blood tests will be required by your GP/hospital.
In the event of any of the following side effects please contact your GP or hospital specialist as soon as possible:
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Mouth ulcers
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising

**Contraception**
- It is not clear whether ethosuximide affects the contraceptive pill. It is therefore advisable to take extra precautions by using barrier methods such as condoms, please discuss alternative contraceptive methods with your specialist.

**Pregnancy and breast feeding**
- Ethosuximide crosses the placenta barrier, there is a chance that ethosuximide can affect your baby so please inform your specialist before you conceive so that your medication can be reviewed.
- We recommend you take folic acid 5mg daily from at least twelve weeks prior to conception until the end of week 12 of pregnancy.
- Ethosuximide passes into breast milk, therefore is not usually recommended for breast feeding mothers.

**Drug interactions**
Medication such as paracetamol and aspirin can be taken with ethosuximide.
Ethosuximide can affect levels of other antiepileptic medication in the body, particularly phenytoin.
Other antiepileptic medication can affect the levels of ethosuximide in the body, including sodium valproate, carbamazepine, primidone, phenobarbital and lamotrigine.
Always remind your doctor or pharmacist that you take ethosuximide when any new medication is started or discussed.

**Other useful information**
- The medication can be taken with or without food, the capsules should be swallowed whole. Do not stop taking your medication suddenly or without consultation with your doctor. Inform your specialist about any other medication you may be taking.
- Keep a record of your seizures when you start any new medication. This will help determine future drug dosages.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.
- The capsules should be stored below 30°C away from moisture and should not be refrigerated. The liquid should be stored below 25 °C.

**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 now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history
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