

Topiramate

Topiramate (topamax) is a medication which is FDA-approved for treating seizures and preventing migraines. Research has also identified a wide array of psychiatric benefits for topiramate including:

- Binge eating and weight loss
- Alcohol and Cocaine abuse
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- Irritability
- Depression
- Tremor
- Post traumatic stress

Topiramate is generally well tolerated, the main problem with it is concentration problems (such as word-finding difficulty) and this can be avoided by raising the dose slowly or using lower doses.

How should I take it?

Topiramate can be taken divided twice per day or taken all at once, with or without food. Most people prefer to take it at night, as it can cause drowsiness, but it is fine to take in the morning if that works better for you.

What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

How long do I need to take it?

This will depend on the reason you are taking it. If topiramate helps with weight gain, you may find that this benefit wears off after 6

months at which point you should consider coming off it.

What happens if I stop it?

Topiramate is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms. You may read that stopping topiramate can cause seizures; this

Key Points

1. Concentration problems are the main side effect.
2. Rarely, topiramate can cause kidney stones.

warning only applies to people who take it for seizures.

Side effects

These side effects tend to improve with time or by lowering the dose:

Impaired coordination, difficulty with concentration, memory or word-finding, drowsiness, and gastrointestinal symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramping.

As you are starting the medicine, use caution when driving or performing tasks that require alertness. This should not be a problem once you have adjusted to the medicine and know how it affects you.

Kidney Stones: 1.5% of patients treated with topiramate developed kidney stones. You can reduce this risk by staying hydrated.

Pregnancy: Topiramate has not been adequately evaluated during pregnancy.

Interactions

Recreational drugs: Alcohol can increase the dizziness and dyscoordination of topiramate. Alcohol and recreational drugs can also prevent topiramate from working.

Birth control: Topiramate may decrease the effectiveness of oral contraceptives. It is best to use two forms of protection or speak with your physician about changing your form of birth control.

Other medications: These web sites help you check for drug interactions. You should talk with us about the information you find as many drug interactions have only a mild effect:

www.webmd.com/interaction-checker
reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker

Overdose

An overdose of topiramate should be assessed and treated in the emergency room. In severe cases, overdose may result in delirium, liver and renal failure, and coma.

How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag with a little water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds or kitty litter) and throw in the trash.

Quick facts

Brand name	Topamax
Dose range	25-400mg/day
Sizes	Tabs: 25, 50, 100, 200mg Also available as XR form and sprinkle caps.
Release date	12/24/1996
FDA-approval	Epilepsy (seizures), migraines

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 2/15/2014