

## Parent and Carer's Information Leaflet

# Phenobarbitone

(also called Phenobarbital)

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## Phenobarbitone (also called Phenobarbital)

Phenobarbitone is a medicine used in epilepsy to control generalised and partial seizures.

The medicine is available in liquid (flavoured) consisting of 15mg per teaspoon (5ml) and tablets (15mg, 30mg, 60mg). Some hospitals supply alcohol-free formulations of varying phenobarbital strengths e.g. 25mg per teaspoon (5ml)

### How do I use it?

- The medicine (either liquid or tablet) is taken either once or twice or three times a day.
- If your child takes the liquid form you should use either a measuring spoon or oral syringe to ensure that your child receives the right amount.
- The tablets may be crushed and taken in some soft food or juice.
- If a dose of the medicine is forgotten, and you remember up to 4 hours after missing the dose, give the forgotten dose as soon as you can.
- If you remember only at or near the time the next dose is due, just give your child the usual dose. **Do not** give any extra Phenobarbitone.
- If your child vomits within 15 minutes of taking a dose of the medicine, then give the dose again; if your child vomits after 15 minutes of taking the dose, then **do not** give it again.

The medicine is at the correct dosage when you child has stopped having seizures (fits) and has no side effects. Rarely, it may be necessary to measure the blood level of the medicine if control of the fits or seizures is not satisfactory or if there is any concern about side effects. Follow the dose plan worked out by your doctor. If your child has been taking the medicine regularly, **do not stop it suddenly** as this could bring on a seizure. Keep a seizure diary if you can and remember to always bring all the medications with you to clinic appointments.

### Use With Other Medicines?

Most over-the-counter medicines and several antibiotics can be used with Phenobarbitone. Folic Acid supplements should not be used without first talking to the doctor. If your child is taking other anticonvulsant medicines, this may affect the blood level of Phenobarbitone, resulting in either poor control of the fits or possible side effects. If this does occur, you should contact your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse. Phenobarbitone may reduce the effect of the oral contraceptive pill; this should be discussed with your doctor. Always tell your doctor or pharmacist if on phenobarbitone.

### What are the common side effects?

Although side effects may occur, these are uncommon. If you think your child is showing any side effects, you should contact your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse.

1. Drowsiness and lethargy may occur during the first 7-14 days of treatment; if the drowsiness does not go away after 14 days you should consult your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse.
2. Clumsiness or unsteadiness may also be seen in the first 2 weeks of treatment. If it does not go away contact your doctor or specialist nurse.
3. Some children develop behavioural difficulties or mood swings with Phenobarbitone; this may show itself as irritability, aggression or hyperactivity. The sleeping pattern may be disrupted. These effects may disappear if the dosage of medicine is reduced; if the effects do not go away the medicine may need to be stopped but this **must** be discussed with your doctor first.
4. Some children may develop breathing difficulties. If this happens consult your doctor.
5. An allergic skin rash consisting of a red, blistering skin rash with or without fever, irritability and vomiting may develop within the first month of starting treatment. This is rare, but if it should happen you must contact your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse **immediately**.

For further information please refer to the manufacturer's information leaflet.