

Parent/Carer's Information Leaflet

Phenytoin

(also called Epanutin)

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Phenytoin (Also called Epanutin)

Phenytoin is a medicine used in epilepsy to control generalised and focal or partial seizures, fits or convulsions. It is often used in hospital as it can be given intravenously (by drip), e.g. after head injury or brain surgery or on Paediatric Intensive Care. Sometimes patients then go home on a short course of oral Phenytoin.

The medicine is available in a liquid (cherry-flavoured) consisting of 30 mg per 5ml, capsules (25, 50, 100 or 300mg). Phenytoin Infatabs which are chewable tablets (50mg or 100mg) are also available. Several different brands are available and your child should receive exactly the same preparation and brand of Phenytoin (either liquid or tablets) unless told otherwise by your **doctor**.

A dose adjustment may be necessary if switching between tablets and capsules.

How do I use it?

- Phenytoin is usually taken twice 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 capsules may be taken with water, fruit juice or milk.
- If a dose of the medicine is forgotten and you remember up to 4 hours after the missed dose, give the forgotten dose immediately.
- 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 Phenytoin.
- If your child vomits within 15 mins of taking a dose of the medicine then give the dose again; if your child vomits after 15 mins of taking the dose, then **do not** give it again.
- If given with nasogastric feeds, give in middle of 2 hourly feed break

The medicine is at the correct dosage when your child is free of seizures, convulsions (fits) and has no side effects. It is often necessary

to measure the blood level of the medicine if control of the fits and seizures is not satisfactory, or if there are any side effects.

If your child has been taking the medicine regularly, **do not stop it suddenly** as this could bring on a fit or convulsion.

Keep a seizure diary if you can and remember to always bring all the medicines with you to clinic appointments.

Use with other medicines?

Most over-the-counter medicines (antacids, aspirin) and some antibiotics can be used with Phenytoin. Phenytoin may reduce the effect of the oral contraceptive pill; a higher "strength" of the pill may need to be taken or an alternative method of contraception and this should be discussed with your doctor. You need to tell your doctor, dentist and pharmacist if Phenytoin is being taken as it can also have an effect on the use of many other prescription medicines.

What are the common side effects?

Although there are a number of possible side effects they are very uncommon and most are minor. If you think your child is showing any side effects, you should contact your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse.

1. As treatment is started the following may occur; nausea, very mild stomach-ache, a feeling of unsteadiness and sleeplessness. These side effects usually disappear within the first two weeks of treatment.
2. Unsteadiness, shaking, dizziness, drowsiness, numbness, sleeplessness, nervousness, confusion, slurred speech, or double vision may occur if the child is especially sensitive to a normal dosage of the medicine or receives a high dose. These symptoms or side effects always disappear when the dosage is reduced.
3. Tenderness, swelling and overgrowth of the gums in the mouth, with or without bleeding may occur. This may happen

with a normal dosage of Phenytoin and may appear after a few months of treatment. The swelling and tenderness can be greatly reduced by regular and correct brushing of the teeth for at least 5 minutes in the morning and 5 minutes in the evening, and also by use of dental floss. It is advisable that a dentist should see your child's teeth every six months. Once the Phenytoin is discontinued, the swelling and overgrowth of the gums disappears.

4. Increased growth of body hair is occasionally seen, particularly if the medicine has been used for several months; this increased hairiness may be seen particularly on the trunk, arms and legs but may also affect the face. Acne and greasy skin may also occur. The acne and excess hair disappear once the medicine is stopped.
5. A red allergic skin rash may be associated with fever or irritability. This may occur within a month of starting Phenytoin. If a rash does occur, you should contact your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse **immediately**.
6. Rarely, the medicine may cause an inflammation of the liver (hepatitis), which is usually accompanied by extreme fatigue or tiredness and jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin). Should this happen you should contact your doctor (GP or hospital) or specialist nurse **immediately**.
7. If your child is experiencing some learning problems at school, this is most likely due to a learning disorder which is unrelated to the medicine. However Phenytoin may occasionally affect concentration and memory.

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