

6

ANTI-EPILEPTIC DRUGS

- The majority of epileptic seizures can be successfully treated and controlled by appropriate anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs).
- AEDs are available in a range of doses and formats, e.g., tablets, liquid, nasal sprays, injections and rectal applications (suppositories).
- Almost all AEDs have two names:
 - a generic, or basic chemical name, e.g., sodium valproate
 - a brand, or manufacturer's name, e.g., Epilim.
- It's important to stick to whichever of the two (generic or brand) has been prescribed for you.
- Epilepsy specialists aim to tailor drug treatment to suit the needs and medical history of each individual.
- The aim of treatment is to achieve maximum seizure control with minimum side-effects on the lowest possible dose of a single drug (this is called monotherapy).
- The majority of people with epilepsy will have their seizures controlled on one or two AEDs, while a few may need three or four (known as polytherapy).
- AEDs can produce unwanted side effects, e.g., weight gain or loss, unsteadiness, or drowsiness. Some of these may only last a short while.
- However, any rash or persistent side-effect should be reported to your doctor immediately.
- Stopping AEDs or changing the dose without medical supervision is not advisable and can result in serious problems.
- Some illnesses, infections, fevers and also some other medicines (including over-the-counter remedies) can alter the effectiveness of AEDs. Check with your GP or community pharmacist.
- AEDs can alter the effectiveness of other medications including the contraceptive pill. Always check that your doctor and community pharmacist know about all the medications you are taking.
- It's important to keep a record of your seizures, symptoms and any possible side-effects and discuss these with your doctor at your clinic appointment.
- AEDs are prescribed free of charge.
- Pill boxes to help manage medication are readily available from your pharmacist.

FIRST LINE AEDs prescribed alone when treatment is started

Brand/manufacturer's name

Tegretol, Tegretol Retard
Emeside/Zarontin
Lamictal
Epanutin
Epilim, Epilim Chrono
Topamax

Generic/chemical name

carbamazepine
ethosuximide*
lamotrigine
phenytoin
sodium valproate
topiramate

SECOND LINE AEDs usually prescribed as an addition to an existing first-line drug

Brand/manufacturer's name	Generic/chemical name
Diamox, Diamox SR	acetazolamide
Frisium	clobazam
Rivotril	clonazepam
Neurontin	gabapentin
Phenobarbitone	phenobarbital
Nootropil	piracetam
Mysoline	primidone
Sabril	vigabatrin
Gabitril	tiagabine
Convulex	valproic acid
Keppra	levetiracetam
Trileptal	oxcarbazepine

AEDS FOR TREATING SERIAL SEIZURES AND STATUS EPILEPTICUS[†]

Brand/manufacturer's name	Generic/chemical name
Valium	diazepam
	midazolam

* For quality control reasons, Emeside and Zarontin capsules have been withdrawn from the UK market. Both medications will still be available in syrup form. If you take Emeside or Zarontin, contact your epilepsy specialist or GP to discuss your treatment options.

[†]Status epilepticus is a condition in which seizures persist for 30 minutes or more. It can occur with **all** types of seizure but with tonic clonic seizures it is a medical emergency requiring immediate medical treatment. N.B. However, if a tonic clonic seizure lasts more than 5 minutes or if a second seizure occurs before the person has recovered, call for medical help.

Text supplied by Epilepsy Connections. Last updated January 2008.

Epilepsy Research UK promotes and supports basic and clinical scientific research into the causes, treatment and prevention of epilepsy. The research it supports is entirely funded by donations. A contribution would be greatly appreciated.

Epilepsy Research UK

PO Box 3004
London W4 4XT

Tel/Fax: 0208 995 4781

Email: info@eruk.org.uk

Website: www.epilepsyresearch.org.uk

Registered charity No. 1100394. Company limited by guarantee (No. 4873718 – England).

This is the sixth in a series of eighteen downloadable leaflets produced by Epilepsy Research UK. For others, visit our website.