

BENZODIAZEPINES

CLOBAZAM, CLONAZEPAM, DIAZEPAM, LORAZEPAM, NITRAZEPAM

Patient Information Leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about a group of drugs called benzodiazepines. It does not contain all the available information. It also does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

What are benzodiazepines used for?

Benzodiazepines are usually used to control seizures and other problems related to the nervous system.

When should I take this medication?

- Benzodiazepines may be taken 1 to 3 times a day. The doctor may start your child on a low dose and then slowly increase the dose. Follow the instructions on the label carefully and ask your pharmacist or doctor if you are unsure.
- Do not take this medication more often than directed and do not stop unless instructed by the doctor. Stopping this medicine too rapidly can increase the risk of seizures.

How should it be taken?

- Tablets
Swallow the tablets whole with a glass of water. If your child is unable to swallow the tablet, you may crush it and add it to small amount of food (i.e. yogurt, ice-cream, syrup) before giving it to your child. Benzodiazepines may be taken with or without food.
- Rectal enema (rectal diazepam)
Please refer to separate information leaflet on rectal diazepam usage.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

- Take the dose as soon as you remember and then continue to take it as you child normally would. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the dose your child missed and take the next dose at the usual time.
- Do not double or increase the dose.
- If your child has missed more than two doses or you are not sure of what to do, consult your doctor or pharmacist.
- If your child has less than two weeks medication supplies, please ensure that you have made an appointment with your child's neurologist or arranged to collect more medication.

What side effects can this medicine cause? What can I do about them?

Generally, the common side effects tend to occur at the beginning of treatment. Such side effects may include:

- Drowsiness, dizziness, fatigue, unsteadiness, memory impairment and difficulty in concentrating

Be careful when you are giving your child over-the-counter medicines. Medicines for cold and allergy may add on to the drowsiness. Be sure to supervise your child when he/she is involved in activities such as cycling or swimming.

- Difficulties in breathing, abnormal heart beat
- Increase salivation or drooling (with nitrazepam)
- Double vision and blurred vision
- Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation.
If the medication upsets the stomach, take it with food but do not take it with carbonated drinks.
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Unusual behavioural changes such as hyperactivity or mood changes like increase irritability.

Inform your doctor if any of the above side effects lasts for more than a few days or if they become serious or bothersome.

Rare but serious effects may sometimes occur. Contact your doctor as soon as possible if you notice any of the following:

- Hallucinations (hear or see things that do not exist), confusion or coma
- Difficulty in breathing or tightness in the chest
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Skin rash

Inform your doctor if you notice any other unusual symptoms in your child. Always discuss with your doctor or pharmacist if your child has any problems or difficulties during or after taking benzodiazepines.

Special instructions

Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you want to give any other medicines, supplements or herbal products to your child.

Avoid grapefruit juice if your child is on oral diazepam.

Long term administration of benzodiazepines may cause dependence. Long term use of benzodiazepines should be supervised by your doctor. If the benzodiazepine needed to be stopped after prolonged use, your doctor will reduce the dose slowly.

If your child sees another doctor, inform him that your child is taking benzodiazepines before he prescribes any other medications.

Consult your doctor or pharmacist (6394 1500 / 1501) if you need more information.

Patient information project of Pediatric Neurology Service and Pharmacy