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antiepileptic drugs

The control of seizures is usually managed by using antiepileptic medicines either with a single drug or in combination with others. The preferred option is to gain control using a single drug (monotherapy) but sometimes it is necessary to add a second or rarely even third drug to acquire control (polytherapy).

All drugs have side effects and those used to control seizures are no different. The following information is extracted from the British National Formulary to give an indication of side effects, which can be experienced. It must be emphasized, however, that virtually every person reacts differently to the drugs and it's "horses for courses". What suits some may not suit others. Some of the side effects may be experienced to different degrees but it is equally true that none of them may be experienced.

acetazolamide (Diamox®)

tiredness, dizziness, headache, thirst, excessive urination, depression, loss of appetite, occasional drowsiness, tingling in extremities of limbs.

carbamazepine (Tegretol® Tegretol Retard®)

urticaria (itchy skin rash), blurred vision, diplopia (double vision), ataxia (unsteadiness), nausea

clobazam (Frisium®)

drowsiness

clonazepam (Rivotril®)

tiredness which is temporary and disappears as treatment continues

ethosuximide (Zarontin®, Emeside®)

headache, drowsiness, nausea, weight loss, irritability

gabapentin (Neurontin®)

dizziness, fatigue, headache

lamotrigine (Lamictal®)

skin rash, drowsiness, diplopia (double vision), dizziness, headache,

levetiracetam (Keppra®)

dizziness, irritability, insomnia, ataxia (unsteadiness), tremor, headache, nausea

oxcarbazepine (Trilapel®)

headache, nausea, diplopia (double vision), skin rash, ataxia (unsteadiness), confusion

phenobarbital

drowsiness, lethargy, mental depression

phenytoin (Epanutin®)

skin rash, coarsening of facial features, drowsiness, ataxia (unsteadiness), slurred speech, gingival hyperplasia (overgrowing of gums), hirsutism (excess hair growth), twitching, tremor (rare), mental confusion

pregabalin (Lyrica®)

dizziness, sleepiness

piracetam (Nootropil®)

weight increase, insomnia, nervousness, depression, diarrhoea, rash

primidone (Mysoline®)

drowsiness, listlessness (both usually disappear as treatment continues)

sodium valproate (Epilim®, Epilim Chrono®)

sedation, transient hair loss, weight gain, amenorrhoea (absence of menstruation), irregular periods

tiagabine (Gabitril®)

dizziness, tiredness, nervousness, depressed mood, loss of concentration

topiramate (Topamax®)

headache, dizziness, abdominal pain, memory/concentration deficit,

vigabatrin (Sabril®)

nausea, agitation, aggression, irritability, visual field defects, depression, psychosis (rare)