

Topiramate for headache

Topiramate is used to prevent headaches from occurring. You need to take it every day.

Before starting topiramate:

Your prescriber will consider several factors before prescribing topiramate to make sure it's safe and suitable for you.

Please tell your prescriber if you have:

- Glaucoma
- Kidney stones
- Anxiety and depression (past or present)

Topiramate can harm an unborn baby. Because of this, the UK medicines regulator (MHRA) has introduced a safety programme for people who could become pregnant. Your prescriber will discuss the risks with you, advise you to use highly effective contraception while taking topiramate, and ask you to complete a risk acknowledgement form each year.

How to take topiramate:

You will usually start on a low dose of topiramate, which will be gradually increased. This helps your body adjust and reduces the chance of side effects.

The schedule below is a guide, but your prescriber may change it to suit your individual needs.

	Morning	Evening
For 14 days take:		25mg
For 14 days take:	25mg	25mg
For 14 days take:	25mg	50mg
For 14 days take:	50mg	50mg
For 14 days take:	50mg	100mg
Thereafter take:	100mg	100mg

How long should I take topiramate:

If you are tolerating topiramate well, it is advisable to reach a dose of at least 100mg a day. Ideally, you should take topiramate at this dose (or higher, if prescribed) for at least 3 months before deciding if it's helping.

If you experience side effects that are difficult to manage, contact your prescriber to discuss your dose.

This leaflet reflects a consensus of current clinical practice as agreed by the British Association for the Study of Headache (BASH) Council. It is intended to provide information to support clinical decision-making and does not constitute prescriptive guidance that must be followed in all cases. Clinicians should continue to exercise their own professional judgement and tailor management to the individual. The content reflects the collective experience of headache specialists across the UK, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged, and recognises the ongoing evolution of best practice. This leaflet should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Product Characteristics and the patient information leaflet provided with all medication.

Do not stop taking topiramate suddenly, as your pain may return or worsen and you may feel unwell. Speak to your prescriber about how to reduce the dose safely.

Your prescriber or GP will review your treatment regularly. If it is working well, your prescriber may advise gradually reducing the dose, typically after about 12 months.

Possible side effects of topiramate:

Some people get side effects. These usually get better as your body gets used to the medication.

Please read the information leaflet that comes with your medication for more details. This is not a full list of side effects, but the most common ones are:

- feeling tired
- feeling dizzy or light-headed
- numbness or pins-and-needles in your fingers and toes
- difficulty with language and forgetfulness
- feeling sick (nausea) and indigestion
- decrease in appetite and weight loss
- diarrhoea
- difficulty sleeping
- anxiety, mood swings and depression

If you feel tired or dizzy, do not drive, ride a bike, or use tools or machinery.

Rarely, some people, develop sudden eye pain, redness, or blurred vision – usually in the first month of treatment. This can be a sign of raised pressure in the eye (acute angle closure glaucoma). **If you develop any eye symptoms**, particularly in the first few weeks of treatment, contact a healthcare professional **straight away**. This can be:

- An optician
- Your GP (family doctor)
- An Emergency Department doctor
- NHS out-of-hours services (e.g. NHS 111)

Pregnancy and breastfeeding:

Topiramate is not safe in pregnancy, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding.

You must:

- Do not take it if you are pregnant or trying for a baby
- Always tell your prescriber if you think you might be pregnant

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- Speak to your GP for advice about safe [highly effective contraception](#) (e.g. copper intrauterine device, progesterone only intrauterine system and progesterone only injection). If you are taking the oral contraceptive pill you should discuss this with your GP as the effectiveness can be considerably reduced by taking Topiramate
- Speak with your GP if you are pregnancy planning
- Sign an annual risk acknowledgement form if you have childbearing potential, typically defined as the time from your first period to menopause.

For more information, see:

Best Use of Medicine in Pregnancy (BUMPS)

<https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/>

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

<https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/topiramate-topamax-introduction-of-new-safety-measures-including-a-pregnancy-prevention-programme>

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