



EPILEPSY & Medication

Phenytoin (DILANTIN®)

Used for:

- Tonic-clonic (grand mal) seizures.
- Simple partial seizures.
- Complex partial (temporal lobe or psychomotor) seizures.
- Not effective for absence (petit mal) seizures.

Precautions:

- Make sure your doctor knows if you have diabetes, liver damage or other health conditions.
- People who are elderly or gravely ill should use caution.
- Excessive blood levels of phenytoin may produce confusional states referred to as delirium, psychosis, or encephalopathy, or rarely, irreversible cerebellar dysfunction.

Possible side effects:

Depending on the individual, side effects may occur at varying degrees or not at all, including:

- Rapid movement of the eye ball.
- Decreased coordination.
- Slurred speech.
- Mental confusion.
- Drowsiness.
- Fatigue.
- Impaired concentration.
- Dizziness.
- Insomnia.
- Motor twitching, tremor.
- Constipation.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Headaches.
- Transient nervousness.

Chronic side effects:

- Connective tissue damage.
- Gum overgrowth.
- Coarsening of facial features.
- Enlargement of lips.
- Liver damage.
- Bone loss or softening.
- Excess hair growth.
- Changes in peripheral nervous system.
- Cognitive and behavioural side effects.



Allergic Reactions/Idiosyncratic :

- Skin allergy (if you notice a rash seek immediate medical help).
- Immune or blood system reactions rare.

Tips For Using Phenytoin (Dilantin®):

- Alcohol and other drug use require caution.
- Dose-related side effects like slurred speech and sleepiness may disappear with continuing therapy at a reduced dosage level. Speak to your doctor.
- Gum overgrowth may be reduced by good oral hygiene, including gum massage, frequent brushing, dental flossing and appropriate dental care. Inform your dentist that you are taking phenytoin.
- Taking the drug with or immediately after meals may help prevent stomach upset.
- Liquid suspension should be shaken well before use.
- Capsules should be swallowed whole. Do not open, crush or chew capsules.
- Tablets may be chewed or swallowed whole.
- Adhere strictly to prescribed dosage.

Drug Interactions:

- Alcohol use may affect level of phenytoin in bloodstream.
- Antacids (containing calcium), and folic acid may decrease the effects of phenytoin.
- Valproic acid, carbamazepine (Tegretol®) may affect phenytoin.
- Phenytoin may reduce the effectiveness of Tylenol (acetaminophen), oral contraceptives, steroids, some antibiotics and vitamin D.
- Cimetidine (Tagamet®) may increase the effects of phenytoin.

Inform your doctor of any other medicines (prescription and non-prescription) or substances you are taking.

Daily Dosage:

Adults - 300 to 400 mg/day.

Children - 4 to 8 mg/kg/day.

Children over 6 years may require minimum adult dosage (300mg/day).

Dosage should be individualized according to patient's response and side effects.

Forms:

Capsules – 30 and 100 mg.

Liquid Suspension – 30 mg/5 ml and 125 mg/5 ml.

Tablets – 50 mg.

Missed Dose:

Try to take each dose at the scheduled time. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as remembered. Do not take it if it is near the time for the next dose, instead, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not take two doses at the same time to catch up. If you skip a whole day, inform your doctor.

Storage:

Store at room temperature (15 to 30°C), protect from light, heat, and moisture, and keep out of reach of children. Do not use capsules that are discoloured.

In Pregnancy:

- Women considering pregnancy should first consult their doctor.
- Anti-epileptic medications may slightly increase the risk of fetal abnormalities.
- Breastfeeding is not recommended for mothers on phenytoin.

Warning:

Abrupt withdrawal of any anti-epileptic medication may trigger status epilepticus, a potentially fatal condition of continued seizures without recovery. When there is a need for reduction, discontinuation or substitution of the medication, this should be done gradually and under the physician's care. Never discontinue anti-epileptic medications or make changes in activities unless specifically advised to do so by an attending physician.

This material has been reviewed by the Ontario Drug Information and Research Centre and is offered to provide general information to the public. Its is not intended to be taken as medical advice. Epilepsy Toronto and its advisors accept no liability. Consult you physician and/or neurologist with any questions you may have.