

# PHENOBARBITAL



## Other names

Luminal

## Drug category

Barbiturate (GABA agonist)

## Uses

Phenobarbital is useful for status epilepticus and all seizures except absence seizures.

## Available forms

Tablets (15/30/60 mg), solution (3 mg/ml), IV injection

## Some potential side-effects (inform your doctor if you think you have a serious side-effect)

Sedation, confusion, depression, hyperactivity (children), severe rash, unsteadiness

Long-term: Osteoporosis, Dupuytren contractures, frozen shoulder, withdrawal effects

## Not to be used if:

Severe liver or kidney disease, severe respiratory depression  
Acute porphyria

## Contraception, pregnancy and breastfeeding

Hormone-based contraception is less likely to work and an alternative method should be used. Should avoid in pregnancy as likely increased risk of birth defects (6-12%) and avoid before breastfeeding (causes drowsiness in baby).

## Interactions with other drugs

Avoid alcohol. Folic acid reduces levels. Oxcarbazepine, phenytoin, valproate increase levels. Phenobarbital may reduce levels of carbamazepine, lamotrigine, zonisamide, warfarin, antibiotics and others.

## Monitoring

Consider blood tests for full blood count, sodium, kidney and liver function. Drug level can be checked too for toxicity. Consider vitamin D level.

## How to use it

Day	Morning dose	Evening dose	(Other drugs)
Start date	Nil	15mg	
2 weeks later	15mg	15mg	
4 weeks later	15mg	30mg	
6 weeks later	30mg	30mg	
After 6 weeks	Continue same dose	Continue same dose	

Do not switch between brands. Do not stop taking the drug suddenly.

If no benefit and no side-effects occur, then the dose can be increased by 15mg every 2 weeks up to a maximum dose of 90mg twice a day.

If reducing the dose, then reduce by 15mg every 4 weeks until stopped.

**This information is for guidance only. Always read the medicine information leaflet with any new medicine for full details.**