

## Lamotrigine *(say: lah-mo-tri-gene)*

### What is lamotrigine?

This medicine is used to stabilize a person's mood. We call it a mood stabilizer. Most commonly, it is used to treat bipolar disorder and prevent periods of low mood (depressive episodes). Lamotrigine can be used by itself or combined with another medicine.

You are taking this medicine for:

☐ Bipolar Disorder

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### How does lamotrigine work?

Bipolar disorder can happen when the chemicals in your brain are out-of-balance.

Symptoms of bipolar disorder can last several days or longer, and might include:

- Depression - feeling hopeless, poor sleep, poor appetite, negative thoughts, trouble concentrating, no interest in activities you once enjoyed, thoughts of death or suicide
- Mania - uncontrollable racing thoughts, less need for sleep, risky behavior, feeling irritable or rage, feeling invincible or on top of the world, rapid speech

Lamotrigine works by restoring the balance of chemicals in your brain, which can help:

- Treat the symptoms of depression or mania.
- Reduce how often and how long you experience an episode of depression or mania.
- Reduce how often you need to be in the hospital during an episode of depression or mania.

### How quickly will it start working?

Some symptoms of bipolar disorder might get better before others:

- You should start to notice changes in your mood within the first 2 weeks after starting lamotrigine.
- It can take weeks to months before you feel the full effects and notice the benefits of this medicine.

### How do I take lamotrigine?

- Take lamotrigine regularly as prescribed.
- You can take it with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible, unless it is almost time for your next dose.
- If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule.  
Do not take 2 doses at the same time.
- If you miss more than 3 doses of lamotrigine in a row, contact your doctor. You might need to restart lamotrigine at a lower dose, then slowly increase it back to your current dose to prevent unwanted effects.

### Why is it important to keep taking it?

- Always take the dose that you have been prescribed.
- Do not change how much you take or stop taking this medication without first speaking with your doctor.
- If you do not take it as prescribed, the amount of lamotrigine in your body can get either:
  - too low, reducing how well it treats your symptoms
  - too high, increasing side effects

## What should I look out for?

Here are some possible side effects and what to do if you notice them.

### Common Side Effects



#### Dizziness

Take your time getting up from a sitting or lying position. Do not stand up too quickly.  
Keep well hydrated by drinking fluids.  
Water is best.  
Limit how much alcohol you drink.



#### Drowsiness

If you are drowsy during the day, take this medicine at bedtime. *Caution:* It is dangerous to drive or operate machinery when drowsy.



#### Blurred vision

Can happen in the first 1 to 2 weeks and should go away over time. If blurred vision does not get better, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.



#### Feeling sick to the stomach (nausea)

Eat smaller meals more often during the day.  
It might help to take this medicine with food.

### Rare but Serious Side Effects

#### Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS)

This medicine can cause a severe rash that can become life threatening. This is known as Stevens-Johnson Syndrome.

Early signs:

- skin pain for no reason
- a red or purple skin rash that spreads



Late and more serious signs:

- fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- blisters on your skin or inside of your mouth, nose, eyes, and genitals
- shedding of your skin

Dizziness Image: CC 3.0 BY / Those Icons / flaticon.com  
Hand rash CC 3.0 BY / Vitaly Gorbachev / flaticon.com  
All other images: CC 3.0 BY / Freepik / flaticon.com

## When should I get help?

**See your doctor as soon as possible** if you notice any of the following:

- Your symptoms of bipolar disorder are getting worse or returning.
- You are feeling hopeless, or you feel that there is no way to solve the problem or end the pain.
- Any of the common side effects do not go away or get worse over time.

**Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away or call 9-1-1** if any of these happen:

- You feel like acting on thoughts of harming yourself and/or others.
- You notice **any early or late** signs of Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (see *Rare but Serious Side Effects*).

## What else should I know?

- Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking **any of these** because they can change how this medicine works or cause unwanted side effects:
  - new prescription medicines
  - medicines you buy without a prescription
  - supplements
  - herbal medicines
  - natural health products
- Before taking this medicine, tell your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding / chestfeeding.
- Keep your medicine in a cool, dry place, away from direct light. It is best to not keep it in the bathroom because the heat and moisture can cause the medicine to break down and not work properly.
- **Keep all medicines out of reach of children.**

## It's good to ask questions

Anytime you have any questions or concerns about taking this medicine, talk with one of your healthcare team.

**Call 8-1-1 (HealthLinkBC)** after hours and for any other health advice.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours a day and available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.