

# LAMOTRIGINE

(Lamictal®)

## PURPOSE

Lamotrigine was originally developed to treat seizure disorders as an anticonvulsant. It has also been studied as a mood stabilizer. It is used to treat bipolar disorder (manic depression) and as a helper medication to treat depression.

With bipolar disorder, a person may have mood fluctuations with periods of elated mood (mania, hypomania or “highs”) and periods of low mood (depression or “lows”). If left untreated, these mood swings become emotionally, socially and functionally disabling.

Bipolar disorder is an illness that occurs due to the imbalance of certain chemicals or “messengers” in the brain. **Lamotrigine** is thought to work by restoring the balance of some of these brain chemicals.

## BENEFITS FROM LAMOTRIGINE

- Decrease in frequency and intensity of mood swings.
- Symptoms of depression decrease (low mood, poor sleep, poor appetite, poor concentration, low energy, negative thoughts, hopelessness, feeling tense, and thoughts of suicide)
- Sleeping patterns improve
- Relapses including hospital stays may be reduced

## BE PATIENT – it takes a while

It may take up to several weeks to see an improvement in bipolar depression. It also may take several weeks to months to reach

full mood stabilizing effects.

Take this medication ONLY as prescribed by your doctor. DO NOT take more of it, or use it more often than recommended.

**DO NOT stop this medication suddenly without consulting your doctor.**

**If you forget to take a dose**, you should take it as soon as possible. If it is close to the time of your next dose, you should skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule. DO NOT take two doses at once.

## POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LAMOTRIGINE

- ☞ Drowsiness
- ☞ Dizziness
- ☞ Lack of coordination
- ☞ Blurry vision or Double vision
- ☞ Nausea and vomiting, Heartburn
- ☞ Rash

Some of these side effects disappear with ongoing treatment, while others may not. You may experience other side effects not listed here. Please check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if any side effect becomes bothersome.

**A rare but serious side effect that can occur within days to weeks of starting this medication is a full-body rash (Stevens-Johnson syndrome). Chances of developing this rash are reduced when lamotrigine is started at a low dose and increased very slowly. If you are receiving another mood stabilizer Divalproex (Epival), lamotrigine should be started cautiously and the dose increased even more slowly.**

## Inform your doctor as soon as possible if you develop:

- ☞ Unexpected rash or hives, itchiness

- ☞ Fever
- ☞ Swelling of your lips and tongue
- ☞ Sore mouth or eyes
- ☞ Swollen glands (lymph nodes)

These symptoms may be a sign of an adverse reaction to lamotrigine and may require prompt medical intervention.

Seizures – If you are taking Lamotrigine to treat a seizure disorder, a worsening of seizures may occur, particularly during the first 6 weeks of therapy.

## PRECAUTIONS

- You shouldn't start taking Lamotrigine within 2 weeks of having a viral infection, a vaccination injection, or any other rash (ie. Allergies, Poison Ivy etc).
- As lamotrigine may interact with other medications, you should check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications
- As lamotrigine may cause dizziness, or drowsiness, you may wish to know how you react to this medicine before you drive, use hazardous machinery or perform other tasks that require alertness
- Consult your doctor before consuming any alcoholic beverages while taking this medication
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or breast-feeding before you take this medication

## STORAGE OF MEDICATION

Store away from heat and direct light. Avoid storing in the bathroom medicine cabinet as the heat or moisture may cause the medication to breakdown.

## KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN



BC Mental Health & Addiction Services

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority