



Topiramate

Brand Names: Topamax; Tamate; APO-Topiramate; Epiramax; Noumed-Topiramate; RBX Topiramate.

Short version:

Topiramate is generally very well tolerated as long as used carefully. The key is to start low and work your way up, but even then side effects differ from person to person.

Generally topiramate is used for migraines or epilepsy, but usually at significantly higher doses. The usual side effects can range from feeling dopey (common if you don't work up slowly), tingling fingertips (about 1 in 6), dry mouth (about 1 in 6), a different taste in the mouth (about 1 in 6) or feeling irritable for no reason (a few percent). Very rarely it can increase the risk of suicidal thoughts.

By sticking to a low dose and working the dose up slowly these can usually be minimised or avoided, and generally settle after a few months at most.

If there are unreasonable side effects, then stop the medication and tell a doctor so an alternative can be considered.

Detailed version:

What is this medication used for?

- We are using it to boost the effect of other weight loss agents.
- It is also commonly used to prevent migraine headaches and, generally at significantly higher doses, to treat seizures.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this medication?

- If you are allergic to this medication do not take it, and tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- This medication may interact with other medications or health problems. Generally it can add to the sedation effect of other medications.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this medication?

- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this medication affects you.
- Like other medications that may be used for seizures, this medication may rarely raise the risk of suicidal thoughts or actions. The risk may be higher in people who have had suicidal thoughts or actions in the past. Call your GP right away about any new or worse signs like depression; feeling nervous, restless, or grouchy; panic attacks; or other changes in mood or behaviour. Call the doctor or attend an emergency department right away if any suicidal thoughts or actions occur.
- At high doses this medication may cause an acid blood problem (metabolic acidosis). Usually this is in smaller people (children), people with severe kidney problems, or diarrhoea. The chance may also be higher if you take certain other medications, if you have surgery, or if you are on a ketogenic diet. Over time, metabolic acidosis can increase the risk of kidney stones, or bone problems. We are not planning on using high doses in the weight loss setting.

- This medication may rarely cause visual problems. If left untreated, this can lead to lasting eyesight loss. Stop the medication if having eyesight issues and tell your doctor, there are alternatives.
- A severe skin reaction may very rarely happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Stop the medication and get medical help right away if you develop signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- This medication may cause harm to the unborn baby (increased risk of cleft palate deformity from approximately 1 in a 1000, to 5 in a 1000) if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this medication (which is more likely after weight loss in the appropriate population), cease this medication until discussed with your doctor.
- If you are able to get pregnant but do not want to get pregnant, use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this medication (and in general).
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

- Cease the medication and tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any signs or symptoms that are concerning or "don't seem right".
- Specific concerning things to look for include:
 - Signs of an allergic reaction (can happen at any dose), like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
 - Signs of too much acid in the blood (acidosis) like confusion; fast breathing; fast heartbeat; a heartbeat that does not feel normal; very bad stomach pain, upset stomach, or throwing up; feeling very sleepy; shortness of breath; or feeling very tired or weak. These are unlikely at the doses used for weight loss synergy unless there are significant pre-existing issues.
 - Feeling confused, or not able to focus,
 - Change in behaviour/mood.
 - Memory problems or loss.
 - Trouble speaking.
 - Trouble sleeping.
 - Change in balance.
 - Very bad dizziness or passing out.
 - Not able to eat.
 - Trouble walking.
 - Not able to control eye movements.

What are some other side effects of this medication?

- All medications may cause side effects. However, most people have no side effects or only have minor side effects with topiramate.
- Common manageable side effects include:
 - Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak. "Dopey"
 - Change in taste.
 - Tingling in the fingers or face.
 - Dry mouth
- These common side effects which usually go away with time, and are why we start slow and work the dose up slowly.
- If any of these occur and they are tolerable they should settle. If they are intolerable either cease the medication or go back to the previous tolerable dose and try increasing again as per

the protocol a week or two later, when the body has had a longer chance to get used to it. If unable to tolerate any side effects, there are alternatives.

You may report side effects to the national health agency, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, online. (<https://www.tga.gov.au/resources/resource/guidance/reporting-adverse-events>).

How is this medication best taken?

- Use this medication as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.
- Take with or without food.
- If you miss this medication for a week or more, go back to the start of the up-titrating protocol (12.5mg at night) and work it up again.
- Keep hydrated.
- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this medication. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- **Be aware:** marijuana, other forms of cannabis, anti-epileptic medications, or any sedative prescription or over the counter medications that may slow your actions will possibly add to the sedation effects of this medication (two sedatives = more sedation, even if mild).
- **It can be difficult to halve these tablets as they can be very small.** Ask your pharmacists for the brand with the “biggest tablet size” for your first prescription to help with this.
- There is a sprinkles version if unable to be swallowed.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If you miss this medication for a week or more, go back to the start of the up-titrating protocol (12.5mg at night) and work it up again.

How do I store and/or throw out this medication?

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep the lid tightly closed.
- Keep all medications in a safe place. Keep all medications out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired medications. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out medications.

General medication facts

- If any symptoms or health problems get worse, stop taking it and let your doctor know.
- Do not share your medications with others and do not take anyone else's medications.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your State poison hotline or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.