

# Zonisamide

**Brand Name: Zonegran**



## Short Version:

Zonisamide is generally very well tolerated as long as used carefully. The key is to start low and work your way up, watching out of the main side effect of sedation.

Zonisamide is used in weight loss when topiramate is either ineffective or not tolerated as it is less well established and takes longer to titrate with a greater range of ideal dosing from person to person.

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. By using more than one agent at lower doses we can get similar (or better) benefits to using a single agent at high dose, with less side effects and cost.
- It is historically used to treat certain types of seizures.

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

- If you are allergic to this medication; tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.

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

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this medication. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this medication affects you.

The potential adverse reactions are all considered rare to very rare, but included for completeness as rare doesn't mean never. We minimise the risk from these by starting at a very low dose and working up slowly.

- This medication may rarely cause an issue with the acid-base balance in the blood (metabolic acidosis).
  - The chance may be higher in children and in people with kidney problems, breathing 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 cause kidney stones or bone problems.
- 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.
  - Stop the medication and call the doctor about any new or worse signs like depression; feeling nervous, restless, or grouchy; panic attacks; or other changes in mood or behaviour.
  - **Stop taking the medication** and call the doctor right away if any suicidal thoughts or actions occur.

- Rarely, severe effects have happened with sulfa medications like zonisamide.
  - Sometimes, these have been deadly.
  - These effects have included liver problems, blood problems, and severe skin reactions (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis).
  - Stop the medication and call your GP, the ambulance or local emergency department right away if you have a rash; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; red or irritated eyes; sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes; fever, chills, or sore throat; cough that is new or worse; feeling very tired or weak; any bruising or bleeding; or signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-coloured stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- This medication is not approved for use in children younger than 16 years of age.
- This medication may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If planning on pregnancy, a detailed personal consultation with a doctor do discuss the risks vs benefits is indicated.
  - If you used this medication when you were pregnant, tell your doctor.
- 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?**

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a medication. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, 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.
- Signs of high ammonia levels like a heartbeat that does not feel normal, breathing that is not normal, feeling confused, pale skin, slow heartbeat, seizures, sweating, throwing up, or twitching.
- Change in balance.
- Not sweating during activities or in warm temperatures.
- High fever, fever that goes away and comes back, or long-lasting fever.
- Back pain, belly pain, or blood in the urine. May be signs of a kidney stone.
- Not able to focus.
- Trouble speaking.
- Memory problems or loss.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Bone pain.
- Very bad muscle pain or weakness.
- This medication may cause very bad eye problems. If left untreated, this can lead to lasting eyesight loss. Call your doctor right away if you have new eye signs like blurred eyesight or other changes in eyesight, eye pain, or eye redness.
- A severe and sometimes deadly effect has happened in people taking other medications for seizures that are similar to this medication. Call your doctor right away if you have swollen glands; fever; rash; chest pain; signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine or change in the amount of urine passed; or signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased

appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-coloured stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.

### **What are some other side effects of this medication?**

All medications may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.
- Upset stomach.
- Stomach pain or diarrhoea.
- Trouble sleeping.

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

### **How is this medication best taken?**

- Take with or without food.
- Swallow whole of an evening.
- Talk with your doctor before you use alcohol, marijuana or other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC medications that may slow your actions.

### **What do I do if I miss a dose?**

- Skip it and then take your next dose at your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place.
- 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.
- Do not share your medications with others and do not take anyone else's medications.