

**Generic Name: Phenobarbital**

**Brand Name: Phenobarb**

What Is It Used For?

- Decreasing seizure activity in various types of seizures.
- Especially useful for controlling seizures in neonates and infants
- Given intravenously in the emergency department for status epilepticus.

How Long Does The Oral Medicine Take to Work?

- 10-30 days

What Are The Important Safety Concerns?

- When first starting the medicine, your child may be slightly drowsy and/or dizzy.
- Only adjust the dosage as recommended by your health care provider. They will usually increase this medication slowly to avoid side effects. Never increase the dosage more than **once per week** unless directed otherwise.
- Once you have started with one brand of the medication stay with it. Avoid switching between different brands.
- Check with your pharmacist before taking herbal medications and/or over-the-counter medications. They may have adverse effects if taken with anti-seizure medications.
- Do not stop taking this medication suddenly because this could result in seizures.
- It is important to keep a record of your child's seizures and side effects to determine how well he/she is responding to the medication.

Does My Child Need Bloodwork With This Medication?

- Routine blood work may be done to help determine the best dosage for your child, and also if they have side effects to the medication.
- If your child is required to have blood work it must be done BEFORE he/she gets the medication. This is called a trough level. This level usually falls between 65 and 170.
- A blood test may be done before starting this medication to check your child's liver function and blood counts. Your health care provider will decide if this is necessary.

What Are The Possible Side Effects?

- |                       |                      |                        |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| • Anxiety*            | • Drowsiness*        | • Depressed Breathing* |
| • Behavioral Changes* | • Fatigue*           | • Constipation*        |
| • Sleepiness*         | • Nausea & Vomiting* | • Rash                 |
| • Depression*         | • Hyperactivity*     | • Flushing             |
| • Headache*           | • Insomnia *         | • Liver irritation     |
| • Dizziness*          | • Blurred Vision*    | • Diarrhea             |

\*more common side effects

### How Do I Give The Medication?

- Tablets may be crushed and mixed with food or fluid. Most often it is given as a liquid to neonates and infants.
- Give with food or milk to reduce stomach upset and/or to improve the taste if needed. Do not take with an antacid medication.
- Give your child the medication as close to the same time as possible each day and only the amount prescribed.
- If your child misses a dose, give the dose as soon as you remember or can. If the next dose of the medicine needs to be given in less than 4 hours, do **not** give the dose you forgot. Give the next dose a little earlier and then return to giving the medicine at the usual times after that.
- If your child vomits within 30 minutes of taking the medication, repeat the dose.
- If your child vomits after 30 minutes of taking the medication, do not repeat the dose.

### What Medications May Alter The Effectiveness Of This Drug?

- Valproic Acid (Depakene, Epival) - increases the level of Phenobarbital in your child's body.
- The therapeutic effect of Phenobarbital may increase or decrease when taken with other anticonvulsants.

### When Do I Call My Health Care Provider?

Call your health care provider or go to your nearest emergency room if you are concerned about your child in any way. With Phenobarbital the following would be of concern

- |                               |                              |   |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| • A rash                      | • Unusual sleepiness         | • Behavior changes                      |
| • A change in seizure pattern | • Problems with coordination | • Tiny purple spots on skin or bruising |

### What Are The Available Forms And Dosages?

- 15 mg Tablet
- 30 mg Tablet
- 20 mg/5 ml Syrup    **or**    20 mg/4 ml Syrup
- NOTE: Always ask your pharmacist for the concentration of the medication if you are giving the liquid preparation to your child.