



FACT SHEET

Living with a Brain Tumour - MANAGING MEDICATIONS

Anti-convulsants

- Dilantin
- Tegretol
- Epilim
- Rivotril
- Valium
- Neurontin
- Keppra

The choice of medication usually depends on the seizure type, the possible side effects, and interactions with other medications.

Side Effects

Everyone reacts differently to anti-convulsants, so talk to your doctor about how they are going for you.

Possible side effects include:-

- Swelling of gums – use a soft toothbrush
- Tiredness – take regular rest periods
- Insomnia or feeling on edge – try relaxation
- Poor co-ordination, feeling off balance and concentration problems – take time doing tasks
- Rash, or nausea and vomiting, constipation or tremors – seek medical advice.

Tips for Taking Anticonvulsants

- Keep a diary and note when to take the medication and when blood tests will be done.
- Have regular blood tests to monitor your blood level.
- Do not reduce your medication or take it in different doses without medical advice.
- Limit your alcohol intake – anti-convulsants interact with alcohol. One glass of wine or beer is fine.
- Do not run out of medication.
- Stopping anti-convulsants quickly can lead to an abrupt increase in the number of seizures.
- A diary of seizure frequency and severity should be kept, as it will help when assessing any change in seizures related to changes with medication.
- Establish a routine about taking your medication eg. After your breakfast and evening meal.
- If you have any other illness, anti-convulsants should be continued.



FACT SHEET

Living with a Brain Tumour - MANAGING MEDICATIONS

Steroid Therapy

Dexamethasone

Used to reduce the swelling that often surrounds brain tumours before or after surgery or radiotherapy. The dose of steroids will be kept as low as possible due to their side effects.

Side Effects

Increased appetite and weight gain

- Can put on weight in a few weeks
- Face (moon face), waist and shoulders
- Produce a feeling of well being and may also make you feel like eating more. Some people get acne and water retention

Steroid-induced diabetes

- The level of sugar in your blood may increase
- Needing to urinate more often can be a warning sign
- May need to do a simple daily test to check for sugar in your urine or blood.

Muscular Weakness

- This is a rare side effect and is more common with high-dose, long term steroid treatments.

Most side effects are temporary and will gradually disappear as the steroid dose is reduced.

Steroid drugs often make people feel emotionally uplifted and it is common to feel depressed for a while after you finish your dose.

WARNING

Do not stop taking steroids suddenly, as this can be dangerous. When it is time to stop taking steroids your doctor will advise you how to gradually reduce your dose.

TIP

It is a good idea to carry a list of the medications you use and the dose, in case you become ill and need medical treatment.