PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Levetiracetam

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Elepsia XR; Keppra; Keppra XR; Roweepra; Spritam

Brand Names: Canada

ACH-Levetiracetam; AG-Levetiracetam; APO-Levetiracetam; Auro-Levetiracetam; JAMP-Levetiracetam; Keppra; M-Levetiracetam [DSC]; MINT-Levetiracetam; NAT-Levetiracetam [DSC]; NRA-Levetiracetam; PDP-Levetiracetam; PHARMA-Levetiracetam; PMS-Levetiracetam; PRO-Levetiracetam-250; PRO-Levetiracetam-500; PRO-Levetiracetam-750; RIVA-Levetiracetam; SANDOZ Levetiracetam; TEVA-Levetiracetam

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat seizures.

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

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have kidney disease or are on dialysis.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC,

natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

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

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. 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 drug affects you.
- Talk with your doctor before you use alcohol, marijuana or other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- If seizures are different or worse after starting this drug, talk with the doctor.
- Do not stop taking this drug all of a sudden without calling your doctor. You may have a greater risk of seizures. If you need to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.
- Not all products are meant for use in all children. Talk with the doctor before giving this drug to a child.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.
- This drug may not work as well to control seizures during pregnancy. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

Extended-release tablets:

- You may see something that looks like the tablet in your stool. This is normal and not a cause for concern. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

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 drug. 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 liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Change in balance.
- Trouble walking.
- Like other drugs that may be used for seizures, this drug 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 the doctor right away about any new or worse signs like depression; feeling nervous, restless, or grouchy; panic attacks; or other changes in mood or behavior. Call the doctor right away if any suicidal thoughts or actions occur.
- Severe skin reactions may happen with this drug. These include Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN), and other serious reactions. Sometimes, body organs may also be affected. These reactions can be deadly. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red,

swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; red or irritated eyes; sores in your mouth, throat, nose, eyes, genitals, or any areas of skin; fever; chills; body aches; shortness of breath; or swollen glands.

- Low blood cell counts have happened with this drug. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or if you feel very tired or weak.
- A very bad reaction called angioedema has happened with this drug. Sometimes, this may be life-threatening. Signs may include swelling of the hands, face, lips, eyes, tongue, or throat; trouble breathing; trouble swallowing; or unusual hoarseness. Get medical help right away if you have any of these signs.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs 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:

- Diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Nose or throat irritation.
- Stuffy nose.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Headache.
- Flu-like signs.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All oral products:

- Take with or without food.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.

Oral-disintegrating tablet/tablet for oral suspension:

- Do not swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- Do not take chipped or broken tablets.
- Do not push the tablet out of the foil when opening. Use dry hands to take it from the foil. Place the tablet on your tongue and follow with a sip of liquid before you swallow. Swallow only after the tablet dissolves. If your dose is more than 1 tablet, take 1 tablet at a time.
- Whole tablet(s) may also be mixed in a cup with a small amount of liquid like 1 tablespoon (15 mL) or enough to cover the drug. Let the tablet(s) dissolve all the way and drink the mixture right away. If any drug is left in the cup, rinse cup with a small amount of liquid, swirl, and drink.
- Those who have feeding tubes may use this drug. Use as you have been told. Flush the feeding tube after this drug is given.

Liquid:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

- Do not use a household teaspoon or tablespoon to measure this drug. Doing so could lead to the dose being too high.

Regular-release tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew or crush.
- You may break the tablet in half. Do not chew or crush.

Extended-release tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- **If you are taking the Elepsia XR brand:** Each tablet has 2 layers, a blue layer and a white to off-white layer. If you do not see both of these layers, do not take the tablet. Call your pharmacist.

Injection:

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

All oral products:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

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

All oral products:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Protect from heat and light.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. 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 drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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