PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Riluzole

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

Exservan [DSC]; Rilutek [DSC]; Teglutik; Tiglutik

## Brand Names: Canada

APO-Riluzole; MYLAN-Riluzole; Rilutek

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

## 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 liver disease or raised liver enzymes.

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?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- If you are Japanese, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- 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.

## 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 high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Severe and sometimes deadly pancreas problems (pancreatitis) have happened with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have severe stomach pain, severe back pain, or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Liver problems have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these have been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have 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.

- Low white blood cell counts have rarely happened with this drug. This may lead to a higher chance of getting an infection. Tell your doctor if you have ever had a low white blood cell count. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat.

## 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:

- Upset stomach.
- Stomach pain.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.

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 products:

- Take this drug on an empty stomach. Take at least 1 hour before or at least 2 hours after a meal.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health

care provider, even if you feel well.

### Liquid (suspension):

- Shake well for at least 30 seconds before each use.
- 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.
- If the adapter has not been put in the bottle when you get it, prepare the bottle as you have been told or read the package insert. Use a new adapter with each new bottle. Do not take the adapter out of the bottle after it has been put in.
- Clean the measuring device as you have been told. If you have questions about cleaning the measuring device, read the package insert or talk with the doctor or pharmacist.
- Those who have feeding tubes may use this drug. Use as you have been told. Flush the feeding tube after this drug is given.

### Oral film:

- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Be sure your hands are dry before you touch this drug.
- Place on the tongue and let dissolve.
- Do not cut or split the film.
- Do not take with liquid.
- When the film is dissolving, swallow saliva like normal. Do not chew, spit, or talk when the film is dissolving.

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

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, on an empty stomach.
- 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.

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

### All products:

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

### Liquid (suspension):

- Store upright with the cap on.
- Do not freeze.
- After first opening, throw away any part not used after 15 days.

### Film:

- Store in pouch until ready for use.

## 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.
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doctor, nurse, 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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