PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Sodium Phenylbutyrate

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

Buphenyl; Olpruva; Pheburane

Brand Names: Canada

Pheburane

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat urea cycle problems.
- This drug is not for use to treat sudden high ammonia levels. Be sure you know the signs of high ammonia levels. Sudden high ammonia levels need emergency medical care and can be deadly. Talk with the doctor.

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

For all patients taking 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 a rare hereditary health problem like glucose-galactose malabsorption, fructose intolerance, or sucrase-isomaltase deficiency. Some of these products have sucrose.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Divalproex, haloperidol, or valproic acid.

Children:

- If your child weighs less than 44 lb (20 kg). Some brands are not for use in children who weigh less than 44 lb (20 kg).

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.
- Follow the diet plan that your doctor told you about.
- Wear disease medical alert ID (identification).
- If you are on a low-sodium or sodium-free diet, talk with your doctor. Some of these products have sodium.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with the doctor. Some of these products have sugar.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- If giving this drug to your child and your child's weight changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.
- 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 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 electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat; seizures; loss of appetite; or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Dizziness or headache.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Feeling confused.

- Change in hearing.
- Memory problems or loss.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Swelling.

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:

- Decreased appetite.
- Bad taste in your mouth.
- Body odor.
- No period or other period (menstrual) changes.

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.

Powder and tablet:

- Take with meals.

Powder:

- Shake before use.
- Mix powder with liquid or soft food.
- Use only the scoop that comes with the powder to measure powder.
- If mixed with food, take the dose right away. Do not store for future use. If mixed with water, you may store at room temperature or in a refrigerator for up to 1 week.
- 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 pellets:

- Take this drug with food.

Oral pellets (bottle):

- Only use the measuring device that comes with this drug.
- Swallow the pellets with a drink like water, fruit juice, or protein-free infant formula. You may also sprinkle the pellets on a spoonful of apple sauce or carrot puree. Do not chew the pellets. Do not mix the pellets into a liquid. Swallow the pellets right away.
- If you have a feeding tube, talk with your doctor before taking this drug.

Oral pellets (packets):

- This drug comes with 2 packets for each dose. One packet has a Mix-Aid to help the drug dissolve in water. One packet has the drug in it. Be sure you know which packet has the Mix-Aid and which packet has the drug.
- To mix this drug, first pour the contents of the Mix-Aid packet into water in a cup. The amount of Mix-Aid and water to use depends on the dose. Be sure you know how much to use. Stir until dissolved. Then, add the contents of the packet with this drug in it and stir.
- Drink the whole dose within 5 minutes after stirring. After drinking, pour more water into the cup and drink to be sure the whole dose is taken. Be sure you know how

much extra water to use.

- If you have not taken this drug within 30 minutes after mixing, throw it away.
- If you have a feeding tube, talk with your doctor before taking this drug. This drug is not for use with all types of feeding tubes.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Powder and tablet:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, with a meal.
- 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.

Oral pellets (bottle):

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, with food.
- If it is less than 3 hours until the next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to the normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Oral pellets (packets):

- Take a missed dose with food as soon as you think about it on the same day you missed the dose.
- If you do not think about the missed dose until the next day, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.

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

All products:

- Store at room temperature 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.

Oral pellets (bottle), powder, and tablets:

- Keep lid tightly closed.

Oral pellets (bottle):

- After opening, throw away any part not used after 45 days.

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.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your 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.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-10-06

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

Sodium Phenylbutyrate - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center