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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Zonisamide

This information from Lexicomp® 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

Zonegran

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat seizures.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell the doctor **BEFORE** my child takes this drug?

- If your child has an allergy to this drug or any part of this drug.
- If your child is allergic to any drugs like this one or any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If your child has a sulfa allergy.
- If your child has kidney disease.

## If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby or plans to breast-feed a baby.

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

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or

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

## **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- If your child is allergic to tartrazine, talk with your child's doctor. Some products have tartrazine.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Sweating less has happened with this drug mainly in children. Sometimes, this has led to heat stroke and hospital stays. Talk with the doctor.
- Have your child be careful in hot weather or while your child is being active. Have your child drink lots of fluids to stop fluid loss.
- This drug may cause an acid blood problem (metabolic acidosis). The chance may be higher in children and in people with kidney problems, breathing problems, or diarrhea. The chance may also be higher if your child takes certain other drugs, has surgery, or is on a diet high in fat called a ketogenic diet. Over time, metabolic acidosis can cause kidney stones, bone problems, or growth problems in children.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- Talk with the doctor before giving your child other drugs and natural products that may slow your child's actions.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.

- This drug is not approved for use in children younger than 16 years of age. Talk with the doctor.

### **If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- This drug may cause harm to an unborn baby. Females must use birth control while taking this drug. If your child gets pregnant, call your child's doctor right away.
- If your child used this drug when she was pregnant, tell the baby's doctor.

### **What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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.
- Change in balance.
- Not sweating during activities or in warm temperatures.
- High fever, fever that goes away and comes back, or long-lasting fever.
- Back pain, belly pain, or blood in the urine. May be signs of a kidney stone.
- If seizures are worse or not the same after starting this drug.
- Not able to focus.
- Trouble speaking.
- Change in eyesight.

- Memory problems or loss.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Bone pain.
- Very bad muscle pain or weakness.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly effect has happened in people taking drugs for seizures like this drug. Call the doctor right away if your child has swollen glands; fever; rash; chest pain; not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed; or signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Rarely, very bad effects have happened with sulfa drugs. Sometimes, these have been deadly. These effects have included liver problems, blood problems, and very bad skin reactions (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis). Call the doctor right away if your child has a rash; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; red or irritated eyes; sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes; fever, chills, or sore throat; cough that is new or worse; feeling very tired or weak; any bruising or bleeding; or signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Patients who take this drug may be at a greater risk of having thoughts or actions of suicide. The risk may be greater in people who have had these thoughts or actions in the past. Call the doctor right away if signs like low mood (depression), nervousness, restlessness, grouchiness, panic attacks, or changes in mood or actions are new or worse. Call the doctor right away if any thoughts or actions of suicide occur.

## **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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.
- Upset stomach.

- Not hungry.
- Stomach pain or diarrhea.
- Trouble sleeping.

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## **How is this drug best given?**

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Give this drug with or without food.
- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, open, or crush.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids every day unless told to drink less liquid by your child's doctor.
- Do not stop giving this drug to your child all of a sudden without calling the doctor. Your child may have a greater risk of seizures. If your child needs to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as told by the doctor.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.

## **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

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

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

- Store at room temperature.
- Protect 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.

## General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Keep a list of all your child's drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your child's doctor.
- Talk with your child's doctor before giving your child any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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 information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you

receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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