# PHENYTOIN

*fen-ih-toe-in*

## What does it do?

*Phenytoin* is used to treat and prevent seizures.

## Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have liver problems.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

## How should you take it?

Take *phenytoin* regularly as directed.
Capsule: Take with a glass of water.
Chewable tablet (Infatabs®): You can either swallow these whole with a drink of water, or chew them.
Liquid: Measure carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon. Shake the bottle well before measuring each dose.

## What if you forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as possible and continue as directed.

## Can you take other medicines?

*Phenytoin* can react with many medicines, sometimes with severe results.

Remember to tell your pharmacist or doctor you are taking *phenytoin* before starting any other medicines or treatments, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

## What side effects might you notice?

| Side Effects | Recommended action |
|---|---|
| Skin rash, skin peeling or blisters | Stop taking and see your doctor immediately |
| Suicidal thoughts<br>Reduced number of blood cells that fight infections or help your blood to clot - symptoms include: fever, chills, sore throat or generally feeling unwell, or easy or unusual bruising or bleeding<br>Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain | Tell your doctor immediately |
| Unusual eye movements<br>Loss of co-ordination/walking or handwriting problems, trouble concentrating, confusion, slurred speech | Tell your doctor |
| Dizziness, drowsiness<br>More body and facial hair | Tell your doctor if troublesome |
| Enlarged, tender or bleeding gums | Brush and floss your teeth regularly, and see your dentist regularly. |
| Stomach upset | Take with food |

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

## Other information:

- Some contraceptives may not work as well while you are taking *phenytoin*, and for 4 weeks after stopping. Discuss with your doctor or pharmacist.
- *Phenytoin* can impair your ability to do tasks such as driving or using machines. Alcohol makes this worse. Discuss your risk with your health professional. (search NZTA - Are you safe to drive?)
- You may need blood tests from time to time to make sure you are taking the right dose of *phenytoin*.
- Long-term use of *phenytoin* may weaken your bones.
- Do not stop taking *phenytoin* without talking to your doctor first, unless you have a skin rash (see Side Effects).