Gemfibrozil for hyperlipidaemia (Lopid)

Gemfibrozil reduces fat (lipid) levels. Take your doses about half an hour before a meal.

Some lifestyle changes will also help to reduce your lipid level - eat healthy food, stop smoking, increase the exercise you take, and reduce the amount of salt in your diet. The most common side-effect is indigestion. If you develop any unusual aches and pains in your muscles, contact your doctor for advice.

About gemfibrozil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of medicine</th>
<th>A lipid-regulating medicine commonly known as a fibrate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Used for</td>
<td>Hyperlipidaemia (adults)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also called</td>
<td>Lopid®</td>
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<tr>
<td>Available as</td>
<td>Tablets (600 mg) and capsules (300 mg)</td>
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Lipid is another word for fat. Cholesterol and triglycerides are types of lipid. When the concentration of lipids in your blood is too high, it is called hyperlipidaemia. Lipids are made naturally in our bodies and are also absorbed from the food we eat. If the levels of lipids are too high, the excess fat is deposited on to the walls of our blood vessels. This can lead to patches like small fatty lumps developing within the lining of some blood vessels. These patches can reduce the flow of blood, and lead to heart disease, stroke, and blood circulation problems.

High levels of lipids do not make people feel ill, but they can cause the problems mentioned above if left untreated. By lowering the levels of fats, gemfibrozil helps to prevent these long-term heart and circulation problems. Your treatment will be more successful if you also follow the healthy lifestyle advice given by your doctor.

It is likely that you will be prescribed gemfibrozil if you have a high level of a lipid called triglyceride. It may also be given for other types of hyperlipidaemia, especially if other medicines (called statins) are not suitable for you.

Before taking gemfibrozil

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine can only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking gemfibrozil it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breast-feeding.
- If you have problems with the way your kidneys work, or problems with the way your liver works.
- If you have bile and gallbladder problems, or gallstones.
- If you have an underactive thyroid.
- If you have diabetes.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you have ever had an allergic or bad reaction to a medicine.
How to take gemfibrozil

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer’s printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about gemfibrozil, and it will also provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you could experience from taking it.
- Take gemfibrozil exactly as your doctor tells you to. There are two strengths of gemfibrozil available - a 300 mg capsule and a 600 mg tablet. It is usual to be prescribed 600 mg twice daily (as tablets). Take your doses ½-1 hour before a meal. This is because gemfibrozil is absorbed better when your stomach is empty. It is best to take gemfibrozil with the same meals each day, as this helps remind you to take your doses regularly. The ideal times to take your doses are before your breakfast and evening meal. If your doctor feels that a lower dose would be more suitable for you, your dose will be 900 mg (as one tablet and one capsule) taken once daily, ½-1 hour before your evening meal.
- Swallow the tablets/capsules whole with a drink of water. Do not break the tablets or open the capsules, as they have an unpleasant taste.
- If you forget to take a dose, don’t worry, just take your next dose when it is due. Do not take two doses together to make up for the forgotten dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Try to keep your regular appointments with your doctor. This is so your doctor can check on your progress. You will need to have regular blood tests during your treatment with gemfibrozil to check that your blood and liver stay healthy.
- Your doctor will give you advice about eating a healthy diet, avoiding drinking too much alcohol, reducing the amount of salt in your diet, stopping smoking, and taking regular exercise. Following this advice will also help you to reduce your risk of developing heart and blood vessel disease.
- If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are safe to take with gemfibrozil. This is because gemfibrozil has the potential to interact with other medicines.
- Treatment with gemfibrozil is usually long-term unless you experience an adverse effect. Continue to take the tablets/capsules unless you are advised otherwise by your doctor.

Can gemfibrozil cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with gemfibrozil. The best place to find a full list of the side-effects which can be associated with your medicine, is from the manufacturer’s printed information leaflet supplied with the medicine. Alternatively, you can find an example of a manufacturer’s information leaflet in the reference section below. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very common gemfibrozil side-effects (these affect more than 1 in 10 people)</th>
<th>What can I do if I experience this?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigestion</td>
<td>Stick to simple foods - avoid fatty or spicy meals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common gemfibrozil side-effects (these affect less than 1 in 10 people)</td>
<td>What can I do if I experience this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tummy (abdominal) pain, wind, feeling sick</td>
<td>Stick to simple foods - avoid fatty or spicy meals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Drink plenty of water and ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headache continues, speak with your doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
<td>Drink plenty of water to replace any lost fluids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>Try to eat a well-balanced diet and drink several glasses of water each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of spinning (vertigo), feeling tired</td>
<td>Do not drive and do not use tools or machines while affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin rash</td>
<td>If this becomes severe or troublesome, speak with your doctor</td>
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**Important:** if you develop any muscle aches or pains, particularly in your legs, you should tell your doctor about it. This is a rare, but potentially serious, side-effect of treatment.

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store gemfibrozil
Important information about all medicines

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Further reading & references

- Manufacturer’s PIL, Lopid® 300 mg Capsules and 600 mg Film-coated Tablets; Pfizer Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated April 2016.

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