Levetiracetam for epilepsy (Keppra, Matever, Desitrend)

You need to take levetiracetam regularly to prevent seizures from occurring. Do not stop taking it unless your doctor tells you to.

You can take your doses either before or after food.

The most common side-effects are feeling sleepy, headache, and symptoms of a common cold.

About levetiracetam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of medicine</th>
<th>An antiepileptic medicine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used for</td>
<td>Epilepsy in children and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also called</td>
<td>Keppra®; Matever®; Desitrend®</td>
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<tr>
<td>Available as</td>
<td>Tablets, oral liquid medicine, sachets of granules, and injection</td>
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Having epilepsy means that you have had more than one unexplained fit, or seizure. A seizure is a short episode of symptoms caused by a burst of abnormal electrical activity in your brain. Different parts of the brain control different functions of your body, so the symptoms that occur during a seizure will depend on where the abnormal burst of electrical activity occurs.

Symptoms that may occur during a seizure can affect your muscles, sensations, behaviour, emotions, consciousness, or a combination of these. The seizures can be prevented in most people by suitable antiepileptic medication. Levetiracetam helps to prevent the seizures from occurring. It is sometimes used on its own and sometimes alongside other antiepileptic medication.

Before taking levetiracetam

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you (or your child if you are the carer) start taking levetiracetam it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby, or breastfeeding.
- If you have any problems with the way your kidneys work, or with the way your liver works.
- 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 reaction to a medicine.

How to take levetiracetam

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about levetiracetam and will provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you may experience from taking it.
- Take levetiracetam exactly as your doctor tells you to. Your dose will be printed on the label of the pack to remind you about what the doctor said. It is usual to start treatment on a low dose, and then for the dose to be increased gradually to a regular maintenance dose. Most people will be prescribed two doses a day - these should be taken in the morning and the evening. Doses for children are tailored to their age and weight.
- Try to take your doses at the same times of day, each day. Having a routine will help you to remember to take your doses regularly. You can take levetiracetam either before or after meals.
- If you have been given levetiracetam tablets, swallow the tablet with a drink of water.
- If you have been given levetiracetam oral liquid medicine, you will be given a graduated oral syringe to measure out the doses with. Check the syringe carefully to make sure you are getting the correct dose. Take the medicine stirred into a glass of water.
- If you have been given levetiracetam sachets, you can swallow the granules directly from the sachet. Have a glass of water to drink straightaway afterwards. Do not chew the granules as they have an unpleasant taste. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can mix the granules into a small glass of water to help you take them. Stir the mixture for about two minutes, and then drink it straightaway.
If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember unless it is nearly time for your next dose, in which case leave out the missed dose. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

- When you first start a new treatment for epilepsy there may be a change in the number or type of seizures you experience. Your doctor will advise you about this.
- Try to keep your regular appointments with your doctor. This is so your doctor can check on your progress.
- If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with your antiepileptic medication.
- While you are being treated for epilepsy there is a small risk that you may develop mood changes, distressing thoughts and feelings about suicide. If this happens, you must tell your doctor about it straightaway.
- People with epilepsy must stop driving at first. Your doctor will advise you about when it may be possible for you to start driving again. This will usually be after a year free of seizures.
- Antiepileptic medicines can harm an unborn child. If you are a woman, make sure you have discussed with your doctor which types of contraception are suitable for you and your partner. If you want to have a family, discuss this with your doctor so that you can be given advice from a specialist before you become pregnant.
- You need to take levetiracetam regularly every day. Do not stop taking it unless your doctor tells you to stop. Stopping treatment suddenly can cause problems and your doctor will probably want you to reduce your dose gradually if this becomes necessary.
- Different formulations of some antiepileptic medicines can act in a slightly different way in your body. Because of this, your doctor may recommend that you continue to take levetiracetam from the same manufacturer each time you obtain a new supply. If so, each time you collect a prescription, check to make sure your supply looks the same and that the name is the same. If you are unsure, or if you have any questions about your prescription, please ask your pharmacist to advise you.
- If you drink alcohol, ask your doctor for advice. Your doctor may advise you not to drink alcohol while you are on this medicine.

Can levetiracetam 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 levetiracetam. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very common levetiracetam side-effects (these affect more than 1 in 10 people)</th>
<th>What can I do if I experience this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling sleepy</td>
<td>If this happens do not drive and do not use tools or machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Drink plenty of water and ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headaches continue, let your doctor know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose and throat symptoms</td>
<td>If this becomes troublesome, speak with your doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common levetiracetam side-effects (these affect less than 1 in 10 people)</td>
<td>What can I do if I experience this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigestion, tummy (abdominal) discomfort, diarrhoea, feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting), loss of appetite</td>
<td>Stick to simple meals - avoid rich and spicy food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling dizzy or tired</td>
<td>If this happens do not drive and do not use tools or machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unsteady or shaky, skin rash, a spinning sensation (vertigo), mood changes, cough</td>
<td>If any of these become troublesome, speak with your doctor for advice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

How to store levetiracetam

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

Important information about all medicines
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, Keppra® 250 mg, 500 mg, 750 mg and 1,000 mg film-coated tablets; UCB Pharma Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated November 2016.
- Manufacturer's PIL, Keppra® 100 mg/ml oral solution; UCB Pharma Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated November 2016.

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