



Handy Fact Sheet (highlights)

Starting lamotrigine and avoiding a serious skin rash

The problem:	Why it is important to you:	How to help yourself:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lamotrigine can cause a really nasty skin rash, mostly in the first 8 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The skin rash can be very unpleasant (but it can almost always be avoided) Lamotrigine can also cause a rash that is not serious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure you start lamotrigine slowly If you miss more than a week's doses you must re-start it again slowly too If you get a rash let a health professional know straight away

What is the skin problem I might get if I start lamotrigine?

Lamotrigine can cause two serious skin problems:

- Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS)
- Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN).

And, yes, they are as nasty as they sound.

Are these skin problems dangerous?

- Yes, **very** important
- Your skin holds the body together so, if it falls off, you are in big trouble
- The SJS and TEN skin problems can be fatal

The skin problems are also very painful.

How will I know if I have the symptoms of the skin problems SJS or TEN?

1. Some symptoms can occur before the rash:

- Feeling unwell, lacking energy, being sleepy
- Fever – feeling hot and sweaty
- Cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose and cold-like symptoms
- Pains in your joints and muscles
- Feeling or being sick, maybe with diarrhoea.

These can occur between a day and three weeks before the skin rash starts to appear.

2. Skin rash - with both SJS and TEN you get:

- Blisters around eyes, mouth, nose and genitals. They may start to join up
- Painful red or purple coloured raised spots
- The top layer of the skin going black and starting to fall off
- Sometimes larger patches of skin become red, sore, swollen, die and fall off.

How can I help avoid getting this rash?

1. Make sure you start lamotrigine slowly

- Start at 25mg a day for **two weeks**, then 50mg a day for **two weeks**, then increase by 50-100mg a day **every 1–2 weeks**

You must start even slower if you also take sodium valproate or possibly the antibiotic trimethoprim

2. Do not miss any doses

- If you miss taking lamotrigine for 7 days or more (or 2 weeks if you're taking sodium valproate as well) you **must** also start again slowly, just as you did when you first started.

3. Take care of yourself and your skin:

- Protect your skin from chemicals such as make-up, deodorants, detergents, fabric softeners and poison ivy, oak or other irritating plants
- Do not eat foods you might be allergic to, or which upset your stomach
- Do not get sunburned.

What should I do if I have a rash?

- You must see a doctor straight away – the same day (or within a few hours)**
- Do not take any more lamotrigine until you have had the rash checked out
- You may need to stop taking lamotrigine completely.

Take this leaflet with you.

Show it to any health professional who sees you, just in case they don't know enough about the rash.

Lifeline provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit www.lifeline.org.au for information & downloads

We also have a more detailed version of this fact sheet

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about lamotrigine and rashes. You must also read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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