

## **What is Dilantin® (Phenytoin)?**

Dilantin® is an anti-epileptic drug that has been used to treat patients with epilepsy since 1938. It is helpful in the treatment of Partial Seizures and Generalized Tonic-Clonic Seizures

## **Starting the Medication:**

We usually gradually increase the dose, until your body gets adjusted to the medication. Since each patient is unique in that he/she breaks down the medication differently or may need a higher or lower dosage to control their seizures, there is no standard dose that is appropriate for all patients.

## **What is the dosage of the pill and what does it look like?**

50 mg yellow, triangle shaped tablet

30 mg white capsule with pink stripe

100 mg white capsule with orange stripe

Liquid: 125 mg per 5cc

## **What Side Effects Can Be Caused by Dilantin®?**

Side effects can be dose related (common) or idiosyncratic (rare)

### **Common Dose-Related Side Effects:**

Decreased coordination, slurred speech, dizziness and unsteadiness when walking, nausea, vomiting, may occur. These side effects are most frequent at the start of treatment, and they are temporary and usually go away as your body gets adjusted to the medicine.

If you have these side effects, your doctor may:

- spread out the dose evenly in two divided doses
- decrease the total daily dose
- advise you to take the medication at bedtime
- instruct you to take your pills with food since this will slow the rate at which the medicine gets into the blood, but will not affect the total amount that is absorbed

#### **Rare Side Effects:**

Dilantin® may rarely cause a liver disorder. Symptoms may include jaundice (yellow skin), rash, itching, poor appetite and fatigue. If these symptoms occur, contact your doctor immediately. Over the years few patients may develop swollen gums, thick lips, or excessive hair growth on face and body.

#### **Skin Rash:**

An allergic rash can occur with Dilantin. It tends to occur during the first six weeks of therapy. If this occurs, contact your doctor immediately.

#### **Pregnancy:**

Women of child-bearing age should be aware that there is a small increase in risk for congenital malformations (fetal damage about 4-6% risk overall and a 0.5% risk of spina bifida). This risk increases in women taking more than one anti-epileptic drug. Discuss this with your doctor.

#### **How Do I Take This Medication?**

It is very important to take your medication regularly since a stable blood level helps to reduce seizures. Therefore, the medication does not work when taken on an as needed basis. It is usually prescribed in one or two daily doses.

## **Can I Take Dilantin with Other Medications?**

Yes, Dilantin® may be taken with most medications. However, Tagamet, and amiodarone can increase Dilantin levels. Dilantin may change the effectiveness of Digoxin, Coumadin, Folic acid, Theophylline, Tegretol, Lasix, and Steroids etc, Always tell your doctor what other medicines you are taking.

## **What Should I Do If I Miss a Dose?**

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. You may have to change your usual times taking Dilantin when you are trying to make up the missing dose. If you have to “double up” on a dose, take that dose at bedtime.

## **Why is My Blood Checked for Dilantin®?**

The blood sample is a more accurate way to measure Dilantin® in your body than counting the number of tablets that you take. This level is important in adjusting your daily Dilantin dose.

It is preferred to have the Dilantin level checked in the morning before you take your first dose so that your doctor can see what your level is at its lowest point in the day.

## **Why is My Blood Checked for a CBC with Differential and SGOT?**

Although Dilantin® rarely causes problems with blood cells or liver problems, we periodically like to check the CBC to count the number of white and red blood cells and platelets. We check the SGOT and SGPT which are indirect tests of liver function.

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