



What is it?

Riluzole, also called Rilutek®, is a medication used to slow the progression of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

How does it work?

Riluzole works by blocking the release of glutamate. Too much glutamate is believed to injure nerve cells. You will not notice a change in your symptoms when taking it. However, it is working behind the scenes to prolong your survival and slow the progression of ALS. The initial clinical trials showed a survival benefit of about 3 months. However, more recent data suggest that the survival benefit may be as much as 12 months, especially for younger patients. Therefore, it is important to start riluzole as soon as possible. Riluzole is not used to treat specific symptoms.

What are common side effects of this medication?

- Fatigue
- Upset stomach
- Nausea
- Lack of appetite
- Increase in liver enzymes

If any of these side effects occur, we will have you stop taking the medication.

What are my responsibilities as the patient?

- Make sure your health care provider knows what other prescriptions, over the counter medications, herbal preparations, or dietary supplements you are taking.

- You will need to have a blood draw before taking this medication and once a month for the first 3 months while starting this drug to monitor your liver function. This can be done at your local laboratory. After you have been on Riluzole for three months you will only need to have your blood drawn when you come for your clinic appointments.
- Know that this medication might include a high out of pocket cost.

What are the dosing instructions?

- Take one 50 mg (one tablet) every 12 hours.
- Take it at the same time of the day each day.
- Take on an empty stomach either 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals. If you experience an upset stomach you may try to take with food.
- You can crush this medication so that it can be taken with a small amount of food or administered through a feeding tube.
- If you missed a dose and it is close to your next dose, skip the missed dose (do not take 2 doses at the same time).

If you have any questions, please contact our office at (734) 936-9010 or send a message through the patient portal. If you experience a life threatening or serious side effect, please contact 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

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Author: Sandy Lemkin, BSN, RN
Reviewers: Stephen Goutman, MD

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