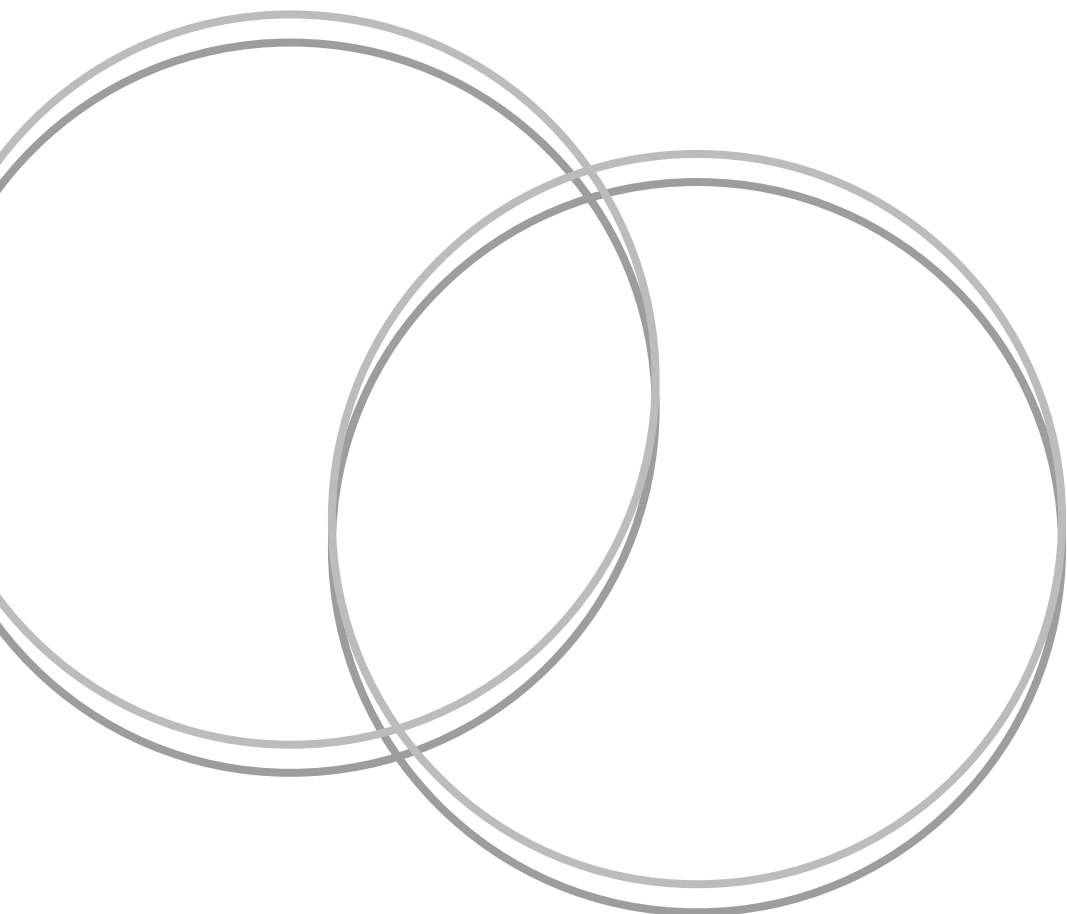


Oral medication used in the treatment of spasticity

Information for patients



Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for people who may use medications or drugs to treat their spasticity. There are many different medications available for this. Some of the more common ones are described here along with their possible side effects. For more detailed information you should always read the leaflet that comes with the medication.

You should talk about the benefits and risks of these medications with your doctor before you start taking any.

What is spasticity?

Spasticity can happen after the brain or the nerves in your spine are damaged. Your muscles can tighten when you do not need them to and become stiff. This is spasticity. Sometimes this stiffness in a muscle can help a person to do something. If it is normally difficult for a person to stand up, spasticity can make their legs feel stronger. But it can sometimes lead to problems such as pain or difficulties with daily tasks. If spasticity carries on for a long time, it can reduce the amount a muscle is able to move.

General guidance

Doses

We will usually tell you to start with a low dose or daily amount. Your doctor might increase the amount slowly to find the right dose for you. These drugs work best if you take them at regular intervals, for example twice a day or three times a day. Follow the advice your doctor gives you.

Cautions

Many of these medications can make you sleepy. You must be careful if you use machinery or if you drive. You should also only drink small amounts of alcohol when taking them. You can talk about this with your doctor.

Withdrawal

Do not stop taking these medications suddenly because this can cause serious side effects. You must talk with your doctor before you make any changes to your medications.

Common medications

The type of medication most suitable for you depends on a number of things including other medical conditions, medications, potential side effects and other symptoms you may have. Your doctor will advise you on the most suitable medication for you.

Baclofen

Baclofen is a common medication used to treat spasticity, spasms, and the pain that goes with them. Spasms are when the body makes sudden movements without a person wanting it to.

1 in 100 people may experience side effects like:

- sleepiness
- weak muscles
- dizziness
- general tiredness.

Please tell your doctor if you have problems with your lungs and breathing, liver or kidney, or if you suffer from epilepsy. These might mean you need a different medication.

Please do not stop taking baclofen suddenly as this can cause extremely serious side effects. These could include:

- seizures or fits
- hallucinations where you see or hear things that are not there
- severe muscle stiffness that can lead to death.

Gabapentin or pregabalin

Gabapentin and pregabalin were first developed to stop people from having fits. We now know that they are also good treatments for spasticity, especially if you also have neuropathic pain or pain caused by nerve damage.

Common side effects include:

- sleepiness (can affect 1 in 10 people)
- trouble balancing (can affect 1 in 100 people)
- runny poo or diarrhoea (can affect 1 in 100 people)
- increased appetite or weight gain (can affect 1 in 100 people).

Tizanidine

Tizanidine only works for a short period of time so it can be used when you need it. For example, it can be used at night and not be felt very much during the day. It can also be used to treat spasticity during the day but needs to be taken regularly throughout the day for this to work.

Common side effects include:

- dry mouth (may affect more than 1 in 10 people)
- sleepiness (may affect more than 1 in 10 people)
- low blood pressure (may affect up to 1 in 10 people)
- slow heartbeat (may affect up to 1 in 10 people).

You will need a blood test before you start to take tizanidine. This is to check how well your liver works because the drug might damage it. The blood test should be repeated once a month for 4 months and regularly after this.

Dantrolene sodium or dantrium

Dantrolene works in your muscles to relax them and does cause sleepiness.

1 in 100 people may experience side effects like:

- reduced appetite
- headache
- nausea/vomiting
- chills/fever.

As with tizanidine, dantrolene can cause liver damage and so you will need to do blood tests. It may take a few weeks for the drug to start to work.

Clonazepam

Clonazepam works well to reduce jerky movements and night time spasms.

Clonazepam makes you sleepy so it should be taken at night. This can be helpful when spasms disrupt sleep. If you take clonazepam for a long time it works less well and you may find it hard to sleep without it. For this reason, we often prescribe a shorter course. Your doctor should check with you regularly while you are taking it.

Contact

Contact details for appointment information and advice during working hours:

Spasticity Team

Telephone: 01865 737 451

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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