

Anti-seizure Medications (ASM)

General information regarding anti-seizure medications for family and friends

Anti-seizure medications (ASM) (also called anti-epileptic drugs or AEDs) prevent epileptic seizures occurring. There are a number of different ASMs available for children. These medications are generally taken orally. They are absorbed through the tummy into the blood stream and circulated to the brain where they effect.

Make sure you give the ASM correctly

ASM are very effective in controlling seizures provided they are given correctly.

- Ensure your child receives the right amount every day.
- The amount should not be altered unless instructed by your doctor.

It can be difficult to remember to take a medication every day. You can ask the pharmacist to put your child's medications in blister packs or pill rolls to make it easier to know when you have forgotten. Alternatively you can buy a pill box from a pharmacy and put a week's worth of medications in it at the beginning of the week. Putting alarms on smart phones can also be really helpful.



What to do if your child becomes unwell

When your child is unwell it is important to encourage them to still take their medication.

- If your child vomits within one hour of taking a dose of the medication then give one replacement dose.
- If your child vomits after one hour of taking that dose, then do not give it again.
- If the replacement dose is also vomited within an hour, contact your GP for advice.

Do not stop the medication suddenly as this could actually bring on a seizure.



When your child first starts taking ASMs

When your child first commences on ASMs the initial dose will be small and it will be increased to the necessary amount for total seizure control. Initiating the drug slowly helps to decrease side effects sometimes experienced at the beginning of treatment. Many factors are considered when prescribing medication. These include the frequency and severity of seizures, your child's age, weight and medical history. As your child grows, a larger dose of medication may be needed.

Side Effects

ASMs are generally well tolerated in children with no side effects. However, like most other medications, they can have side effects. The possible side effects are specific to each particular drug. Some side effects are more common than others. Remember, your doctor will only recommend using an ASM when the benefits of medication controlling your child's seizures outweigh the possibility of your child experiencing side effects. You can obtain information regarding side effects for each drug from your doctor.

Not all symptoms your child experiences when on an ASM will be due to the ASM as even children not taking drugs have regular symptoms caused by other common ailments. For example, tummy pain could be due to the treatment but it might also be due to a tummy bug. If your child has recently commenced a new medication and has developed symptoms please take them to see your family doctor.

It is not necessary to have regular blood tests for medication monitoring unless there are specific problems occurring. Your doctor will advise if and when this is necessary.

Other medications

When buying over the counter medicines, please check with the pharmacist that it is okay to use them with your child's current ASM. Most over the counter medications can be taken.

It is a good idea to always tell new/after hours doctors the name of the ASM that your child is on. This is helpful for them when they are prescribing other medications, for example antibiotics, for your child.

Filling your prescription

Your prescription can be taken to any pharmacy. Although your child's initial prescription was prescribed by your paediatrician or paediatric neurologist repeat prescriptions should be obtained from your family doctor.

Safety

Keep all medication in a locked cupboard out of reach of children.