

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pharmacy: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is Ethosuximide?

Ethosuximide, also known as Zarontin, is a medicine that has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat absence (petit mal) seizures in both adults and children.

- Ethosuximide is available in brand and generic form. The tablets may look different, depending on the company that makes them.
- Sometimes seizure medicines are used for other conditions. The dose of ethosuximide may vary depending on why the medicine is being given and if it is given alone or with other medicines. It is important to follow the exact directions given to you by your doctor.
- Always check the appearance of the tablets with the pharmacist when the prescription is filled to be certain you are given the right medication.

### Important questions to ask your doctor:

- Why am I being given this medicine? \_\_\_\_\_
- What amount should I be taking? \_\_\_\_\_

## What does the drug look like and how should I take it?

### Zarontin Capsules

250 mg (orange, clear gelatin)  
Marked "P-D 237"



### To take capsules:

- Swallow capsules whole with a full glass of water.
- Do not bite, break, or chew the capsules.
- Taking the medicine with food will help lessen stomach upset.
- Usually taken once or twice a day.

### Zarontin Liquid

5 milliliters (ml) or 1 teaspoon is equal to 250 milligrams (mg).  
Zarontin has a raspberry flavor. The flavor of generic liquid may vary.

### To take in liquid form:

- Shake the bottle well before using it.
- Use only a special measuring spoon or device to measure the correct dose.
- Do not freeze liquid for later use.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

**Is it best to take this medicine with food?** This medicine can be taken with food or on an empty stomach. Taking it with food or milk may lessen stomach upset. Try to take it the same way each day, since taking this with food may change the time it takes to be absorbed.

**What should I do if I miss a dose?** If you miss or forget a dose take it as soon as possible. However, if you have missed a dose and it is within a few hours before your next dose, take only the next scheduled dose. Do not double up or take extra medicine, unless instructed to do so by your doctor.

### **How can I remember to take my medicine?**

- Take medicine at the same time each day.
- Take your pills at the same time as some other routine, such as brushing teeth, after meals, or bedtime.
- Use a pillbox so you can check if you have taken a dose.
- Use an alarm to remind yourself of times to take a dose.
- Keep a written schedule or chart of when to take the medicine.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider about problems remembering to take the medicine.

**How long will it take for the medicine to work?** It may take a number of weeks to find the right dose, and then more time may be needed to know how well the medicine works to control your seizures. How long this takes will be different for each person. It may depend on how often you have seizures, what other medicine you may be taking, and how your body responds to the drug.

**Should I write down how the medicine is affecting me?** It is important to write down how you feel while you are on the medicine. Also keep track of changes in how much medicine is prescribed, side effects, and changes in seizures. Take the information to all follow-up visits with your health care providers.

**How should I store my medicine?** Store the medicine at room temperature (25° C or 77° F), away from heat, moisture, and direct light. Keep all medicine out of reach of children. Don't keep pills in the bathroom, glove box of a car, or where children can easily find them, such as in purses, on low cabinets or on counter tops. Do not freeze the syrup.

**Will this medicine affect other medicines that I am taking?** Make sure to tell all your health care providers the names of all medicines, herbal or dietary supplements, vitamins and over-the-counter medicines. Ethosuximide is not known to affect other medicines. Some seizure medicines may interfere with how ethosuximide works and lower or raise the amount in your system. Please see the AED Interaction Sheets for lists of medicines that may interact with ethosuximide.  
(<http://professionals.epilepsy.com/pdfs/epilepsy-ethosuximide-912.pdf>)

**What side effects may occur?** Side effects may occur with any medicine. Some side effects will go away on their own or when the dose of medicine is changed. Others may be more serious and mean that your body is not tolerating the drug. Tell your doctor about all side effects that occur, but do not stop taking the medicine without advice from your doctor. Some side effects include the following:

**Common:** Upset stomach, loss of appetite, diarrhea, sleepy, dizzy, nervous, irritable, agitated.

### **Less common/Potentially serious:**

- **Rash:** Not all rashes are caused by the medicine, but all rashes should be reported to your doctor and checked out. Rashes that may be more serious usually begin in the first few weeks, but can happen at any time. Serious rashes may have the following symptoms and require immediate evaluation:
  - Blisters or sores in mouth, eyes, ears, nose, and genital area.
  - Swelling of eyelids or red eyes.
  - Red spots or patches on skin.
  - Fever or flu-like symptoms that don't go away.
- **Other serious rare side effects:** Depression, severe anxiety or agitation, joint swelling.
- **Allergic reaction:** May be seen with symptoms such as hives or large red spots on the body, itching, difficulty breathing or closing of the throat, swelling of lips, tongue or face.

On July 10, 2008, an advisory panel was convened by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to review data that the FDA had previously collected from drug studies showing an association between many of the antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) and suicidal ideation and behavior, which together are called suicidality. According to the FDA's Alert, among the patients with epilepsy in these drug studies, 1 out of 1000 people taking the placebo (inactive substance) showed suicidality compared to approximately 3.5 out of 1000 people who took an AED. The FDA advisory panel voted to accept the FDA's data at its meeting on July 10.

The FDA has provided the following information for patients, family members, and caregivers at [www.fda.gov/cder/drug/InfoSheets/HCP/antiepilepticsHCP.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/InfoSheets/HCP/antiepilepticsHCP.htm):

- Taking antiepileptic medicines may increase the risk of having suicidal thoughts or actions;
- Do not make any changes to the medication regimen without first talking with the responsible healthcare professional;
- Pay close attention to any day-to-day changes in mood, behavior and actions. These changes can happen very quickly so it is important to be mindful of any sudden differences.
- Be aware of common warning signs that might be a signal for risk of suicide. Some of these are:
  - Talking or thinking about wanting to hurt yourself or end your life
  - Withdrawing from friends and family
  - Becoming depressed or having your depression get worse
  - Becoming preoccupied with death and dying
  - Giving away prized possessions

**We again urge patients and families to contact their doctor before stopping an epilepsy medication because this may possibly lead to seizures and worsening of mood.**

#### ***When should I call my doctor?***

- Call a doctor right away if side effects become severe or cause problems in your ability to function, or if you have any of the potentially serious side effects, difficulty walking, confusion, rash, or an allergic reaction.
- Do not stop the medicine without talking to a doctor first.

***Can this seizure medicine affect bone health?*** Some seizure medicines may cause thinning of the bones. While ethosuximide is not known to cause bone problems, all people taking seizure medicine should take calcium and vitamin D supplements each day. Regular exercise and diet are also very important. People who have thinning of the bones may also need to take prescription medicines to treat this. Talk to your doctor about tests to check the health of your bones and what to do next.

***Can I drink alcohol while on this medicine?*** People taking this medicine should not drink alcohol because ethosuximide can increase the effects of alcohol.

***May I drive while taking ethosuximide?*** Use caution when driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities. Ethosuximide may cause drowsiness or dizziness and other symptoms that may affect your safety. If you have these problems or are having seizures, avoid these activities and talk to your doctor.

## **Just for Women:**

***Is this medicine safe to take during pregnancy?*** Ethosuximide has an FDA pregnancy category of "C" meaning that the benefits of taking the medicine may outweigh the risks of harming the baby. If you find or suspect that you are pregnant, continue use of this medicine and contact your doctor right away. Talk to your doctor about the potential benefits and risks before making any decisions about use of this medicine. Seizures can be harmful to the mother and the developing baby but these can be lessened with proper care.

***Does this medicine affect birth control pills?*** Contraceptives or birth control that contain the hormones estrogen or progesterone (such as birth control pills, injections or patches) may not work completely to prevent pregnancy when a woman is also taking ethosuximide. The dose of contraceptive may need to be increased or injections given more frequently. Talk to your doctor if you start or stop hormonal birth control and for specific instructions on the dose of birth control. Other forms of birth control, such as barrier methods, may also be suggested. Call your doctor if you have any signs of breakthrough bleeding or symptoms of pregnancy.

**Will the medicine affect my menstrual cycle?** This medicine is not known to affect the menstrual cycle. If your cycle becomes irregular, call your doctor.

**Can I breast feed while taking this medicine?** In general, women taking ethosuximide can breastfeed while using this medicine. However, the drug does pass through breast milk in small amounts and the effects on the infant are unknown. According to the American Academy of Neurology, the benefits of breastfeeding for the infant and mother are believed to outweigh the risk for adverse effects. Talk to your doctor regarding all options.

**Are there any specific vitamins I should be taking?** Women who could possibly get pregnant should be taking at least 0.4 milligrams (mg) of folic acid or folate each day. Women taking some seizure medicines may need to take a higher dose of folic acid, up to 4 mg each day. Talk to your health care provider for specific instructions. Folic acid is also found in leafy dark green vegetables, fruits and juices, and lentils.

## More Questions?

For more detailed information about ethosuximide please visit [www.epilepsy.com](http://www.epilepsy.com) and click on Treatment >> Seizure Medicines ([www.epilepsy.com/epilepsy/seizure\\_medicines.html](http://www.epilepsy.com/epilepsy/seizure_medicines.html))