

Lorazepam

Your child needs to take the medicine called lorazepam (say: lor-A-ze-pam). This information sheet explains what lorazepam does, how to give it, and what side effects, or problems your child may have when he or she takes this medicine.

What is lorazepam?

Lorazepam is used to relax muscles or relieve muscle spasms. It may also be used if your child is anxious, has seizures, or has nausea and vomiting because of chemotherapy.

You may also hear lorazepam called by its brand name, Ativan®. It can come as a tablet taken by mouth (orally), a tablet taken under the tongue (sublingually), or an injection. To treat seizures, lorazepam solution can be given through the rectum.

Before giving lorazepam to your child

Your child should not take lorazepam if he or she has:

- an allergy to lorazepam or anything else in lorazepam
- an allergy to benzodiazepine drugs like diazepam or alprazolam
- a muscle disease called myasthenia gravis
- a disease called acute narrow angle glaucoma

Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if your child has any of the following conditions:

- a severe breathing problem (like sleep apnea)
- severe kidney or liver disease

How should you give your child lorazepam?

- Give your child this medicine exactly as your doctor or pharmacist tells you to.
- Do not increase or decrease the amount of medicine without speaking with your child's doctor first.
- If your child needs lorazepam on an "as needed basis" only, speak to your doctor or pharmacist about when you should give it to your child.
- If your child needs lorazepam regularly, give it at the same times each day.
- Lorazepam may be given to your child in a hospital by a nurse from a needle into your child's vein.
- Give lorazepam with or without food. You can give this medicine with food or milk if it causes an upset stomach.
- If your child is taking lorazepam for seizures, wait 5 minutes after giving the medicine for the seizure to stop. If the seizure does not stop in 5 minutes, call 911 or take your child to the closest hospital emergency department (unless your doctor has told you otherwise).

What should you do if your child misses a dose of lorazepam?

Lorazepam is usually taken only as needed, but if your child is taking lorazepam at regular times and he or she misses a dose:

- Give the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose. Give the next dose at the regular time.

- Do not give your child two doses to make up for one missed dose.

What should you do if your child vomits a dose of lorazepam?

- If your child vomits (throws up) one hour or more after taking a lorazepam dose, you do not need to give another dose.
- If your child vomits (throws up) less than 30 minutes after taking a lorazepam dose, give another dose.

What are the possible side effects of lorazepam?

Your child may have some of these side effects while he or she takes lorazepam. Check with your child's doctor if your child continues to have any of these side effects, and they do not go away, or they bother your child:

- drowsiness
- upset stomach
- dizziness
- constipation (difficulty having a bowel movement)
- tiredness
- unsteadiness or clumsiness
- blurred vision
- irritability (grumpiness)
- headaches
- trouble sleeping
- dry mouth
- diarrhea (watery bowel movements)

Call your child's doctor during office hours if your child has any of these side effects:

- slurred speech

- confusion or change in behaviour
- trouble urinating
- agitation or outbursts of anger
- yellow eyes or skin
- dark urine
- trembling
- double vision

Most of the following side effects are not common, but they may be a sign of a serious problem.

Call your child's doctor right away or take your child to Emergency if he or she has any of these side effects:

- loss of memory
- slow heartbeat
- severe weakness
- fever
- severe drowsiness
- trouble breathing
- shakiness
- shortness of breath

What safety measures should you take when your child is using lorazepam?

Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist before giving him or her any other medicines (prescription, non-prescription, herbal, or natural products). Lorazepam does not work well with some medicines, such as cough and cold medicines, and medicines which contain alcohol.

Lorazepam is usually used for short periods of time only. Talk to your doctor about possible side effects if your child is going to be using lorazepam regularly for longer than one week.

If your child takes lorazepam regularly, do not stop giving it without checking with your child's doctor. The dose may need to be made smaller before stopping. If you stop giving the medicine suddenly, your child has a greater chance of having seizures.

Lorazepam may make your child dizzy, drowsy, and less alert than normal. Watch carefully when your child is doing something that he or she needs to be alert for, such as climbing stairs.

What other important information should you know about lorazepam?

Keep a list of all medications your child is on to show the doctor or pharmacist.

Do not share your child's medicine with others. Do not give anyone else's medicine to your child.

Make sure you always have enough lorazepam to last through weekends, holidays, and vacations. Call your pharmacy at least 2 days before your child runs out of medicine to order refills.

Keep lorazepam at room temperature in a cool, dry place away from sunlight. Do NOT store it in the bathroom or kitchen.

Do not keep any medicines that are out of date. Check with your pharmacist about the best way to throw away outdated or leftover medicines.

Keep lorazepam out of your child's sight and reach and locked up in a safe place. If your child takes too much lorazepam, call the Ontario Poison Centre at one of these numbers. These calls are free.

- Call 416-813-5900 if you live in Toronto.
- Call 1-800-268-9017 if you live somewhere else in Ontario.
- If you live outside of Ontario, call your local Poison Information Centre.

Disclaimer: The information in this Family Med-aid is accurate at the time of printing. It provides a summary of information about lorazepam and does not contain all possible information about this medicine. Not all side effects are listed. If you have any questions or want more information about lorazepam, speak to your health care provider.