

# Imipramine

Tofranil, Tofranil-PM (imipramine pamoate), an older antidepressant, the first one of its kind

Imipramine treats depression and panic attacks, and it is also the one medicine in its family approved for bedwetting in children.

## WHAT IT TREATS

**Depression, panic, bedwetting**

## HOW YOU TAKE IT

**By mouth, once or twice daily**

## WHEN IT WORKS

**2-4 weeks; bedwetting sooner**

## HABIT FORMING

**No**

### ⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Antidepressants can bring on new or worse thoughts of suicide, most often in people under **25** and in the first weeks. Anyone taking it should be watched closely for a darkening mood, and should call or text **988** if those thoughts start.

### ① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Imipramine** was the first antidepressant of its kind. It raises serotonin and norepinephrine, chemicals that steady mood.
- For panic attacks it works in the background. It does not stop an attack that has started, but it makes attacks rarer.
- In children it is sometimes used for bedwetting, because it makes the bladder hold more and lightens deep sleep a little.
- It is not habit forming, and it does not work faster if you take more. Steady daily use is what makes it work.

### ⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take **imipramine** at the same time each day. Many people take it at bedtime because it can make you sleepy.
- You can take it with or without food. Having it with a meal often settles a stomach that feels queasy at first.
- Swallow tablets or capsules whole with water. Do not crush, chew, or open them unless your pharmacist says it is fine.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is close. In that case skip it and carry on.
- Keep it in its bottle, up high or locked away. It is dangerous in **overdose**, so safe storage protects everyone at home.

### 🔪 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Sleep and appetite often improve first. Mood usually starts to lift in **2 to 4 weeks**, with more by **6 weeks**.
- For panic, attacks usually get less frequent and less intense over **3 to 6 weeks** rather than stopping suddenly.
- For bedwetting in children, dry nights often start within the first week or two of treatment.
- Dry mouth and drowsiness are usually strongest at the start and then fade, which is a normal part of settling in.

### ♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Dry mouth: sip water often, chew sugar-free gum, and keep up dental visits, because a dry mouth invites cavities.
- Constipation: drink more water, eat more fruit and whole grains, and ask your pharmacist about a gentle stool softener.
- Drowsiness: taking the dose at night usually turns this into an advantage rather than a problem.
- Dizziness on standing: get up in two stages, sit on the edge of the bed first, then rise slowly holding something.
- Blurry close-up vision: this normally eases in a few weeks, so wait before ordering a new pair of glasses.
- Sweating or a faster heartbeat: often settles with time, but tell your prescriber if it keeps bothering you.

### ⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- New or worse thoughts of suicide: call or text **988** now, and tell your prescriber today.
- Chest pain, fainting, or a heart that races or skips beats means call **911** right away.
- If anyone swallows too much of this, call **911** at once. An **overdose** can stop the heart working properly.
- Trouble passing urine, or sudden confusion, needs a same-day call to your prescriber.

### 🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Skip alcohol while you take **imipramine**. Together they can make you very drowsy and unsteady enough to fall.
- Do not drive or use machinery until you know how it affects you, especially during the first couple of weeks.
- Tell every prescriber and pharmacist, since it clashes with some antidepressants, cold remedies, and heart medicines.
- Take care in the heat. This medicine makes sweating harder, so drink water and rest in the shade during hot days.
- If you are pregnant, nursing, or hoping to be, raise it early so you and your prescriber can plan it together.

### ⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop on your own. Panic attacks and low mood tend to return when the medicine leaves suddenly.
- Stopping fast can bring headache, nausea, chills, vivid dreams, and a restless feeling that lasts several days.
- Your prescriber will step it down over **2 to 4 weeks** or longer, which prevents most of those symptoms.
- If it is a side effect you cannot live with, say so at your visit. Switching is done on a plan, not on the spot.

### ❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are we treating my mood, my panic attacks, or both together?
- Do I need a heart tracing before starting or during treatment?
- How will we know it is working, and when should we check?
- Which cold and allergy medicines should I stay away from?

# Where this information comes from

American Association of Poison Control Centers. (2024). *Poison Control: Get help online or by phone*. <https://www.poison.org/>

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## NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.