

Lamotrigine

Lamictal, Lamictal XR, Lamictal ODT, Subvenite, a mood stabilizer that is also a seizure medicine

Lamotrigine holds bipolar depression at bay over the long run, and it also prevents several kinds of seizures.

WHAT IT TREATS

Bipolar upkeep, seizures

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Daily, slow build-up

WHEN IT WORKS

6 weeks to reach full dose

HABIT FORMING

No

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Lamotrigine can cause a rare skin rash that becomes life-threatening, most often in the first 8 weeks. That is why the dose is raised so slowly. Stop the medicine and call your prescriber the same day for any new rash.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Lamotrigine** steadies mood over time. It is best at keeping the low, heavy side of bipolar disorder from returning.
- It also prevents several kinds of seizures, which is where the medicine started before it was used for mood.
- It does not treat mania, so some people take a second medicine alongside it to cover the high side.
- People often stay on it for years because it does not usually cause weight gain or dull sexual feeling.

🕒 HOW TO TAKE IT

- The dose starts small and rises in slow steps over about **6 weeks**. That schedule exists to protect your skin.
- Follow the starter pack exactly. Do not jump ahead or catch up on a missed step, even if you feel nothing yet.
- Take it once or twice a day, with or without food. Pick times you can hit every day without thinking hard.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is close, and never take two at once.
- The melt-in-your-mouth tablets go on the tongue with no water. Chewable ones can be swallowed or mixed in water.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Because of the slow build-up, most people do not feel much for the first few weeks. That is expected, not failure.
- The steadying effect is usually clear after about **6 to 8 weeks** at the full amount, not before then.
- Working looks like the low stretches coming less often, ending sooner, and hitting less hard when they do come.
- Watch your skin closely for the first **8 weeks**, and check after any dose step. A mirror check takes ten seconds.
- No routine blood tests are needed for most healthy adults on this medicine, which many people find a relief.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Headache is the most common effect, especially during dose increases. Water, sleep, and time handle most of them.
- Dizziness and mild unsteadiness usually follow a step up and fade within a few days as your body catches up.
- Nausea can appear early. Taking it with food settles it, and it does not make the medicine work any less well.
- Trouble sleeping happens for some people. Moving the dose to the morning often solves it, so ask before switching.
- Blurry or double vision can appear at higher amounts. Report it, since the amount may be rising faster than you need.
- A mild rash without other symptoms still gets checked. Every rash here is treated as important until proven harmless.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Any new rash means stop the medicine and call your prescriber the same day. Do not wait to see how it looks.
- Go to the **ER** for a rash with fever, blistering, peeling skin, mouth sores, or swelling of the face.
- Call right away for a fever with swollen glands that will not settle, even if your skin looks fine.
- If thoughts of suicide come, call or text **988** and tell your prescriber the same day.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Never restart on your own after a break of more than a few days. The slow build-up must begin again from the start.
- Tell your prescriber before starting or stopping birth control pills, which change your lamotrigine level by about half.
- Divalproex doubles your level and carbamazepine roughly halves it, so any change in those means a new schedule.
- Alcohol adds to dizziness and poor sleep, and heavy drinking makes both mood and seizures harder to control.
- Tell your prescriber early if you are pregnant or planning to be, since your level shifts a lot during pregnancy.

⏸️ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop suddenly. Abrupt stops can trigger seizures and can let mood symptoms return within weeks.
- Your prescriber will lower it over **at least 2 weeks**, and slower still if you take it for seizures.
- If you stopped for a rash, do not restart it. Tell every future prescriber that lamotrigine caused a rash.
- If missed doses are the problem, say so. Pill boxes, phone alarms, and simpler timing fix most of it.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What exactly counts as a rash I should stop the medicine for?
- What should I do if I miss this medicine several days in a row?
- Do any of my other medicines change my lamotrigine schedule?
- When should we expect to know whether this is helping me?

Where this information comes from

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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.