

Topiramate

Topamax, Trokendi XR, Qudexy XR, Eprontia, Qsymia (with phentermine), a seizure medicine also used for migraine and heavy drinking

Topiramate prevents seizures and migraine attacks, and it can help cut back heavy drinking days.

WHAT IT TREATS

Seizures, migraine

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Once or twice daily

WHEN IT WORKS

Migraine: 8 weeks to judge

HABIT FORMING

No

✔ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

ⓘ WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Topiramate** calms nerve cells that fire too easily, which prevents seizures and cuts down migraine attacks.
- It is also one of the better medicines for reducing heavy drinking days in people cutting back on alcohol.
- It does not stop a migraine that has already started. It works by making attacks come less often and hit less hard.
- It is not a good mood stabilizer for bipolar disorder. Careful studies for mania came back negative.

⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it with or without food, and drink plenty of water all day. Fluids are the best defense against kidney stones.
- Swallow extended-release capsules whole, or open one onto a spoonful of soft food and swallow without chewing.
- Expect small weekly increases. Going up slowly is what keeps the tingling and word-finding trouble away.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is near, and never take two doses at once.
- Store it at room temperature and keep the bottle closed. Refill early so you never have to skip several days.

🔗 WHAT TO EXPECT

- For migraine, give it about **8 weeks** at a steady amount before deciding whether it is worth continuing.
- Working looks like fewer headache days a month, milder attacks, and less rescue medicine needed overall.
- Tingling in the fingers, toes, or face is common and usually fades. It is harmless, just strange at first.
- Some weight loss is common. Tell your prescriber if it is more than you want, since that can be managed.
- Fizzy drinks may taste odd or flat. That side effect surprises people but does no harm at all.

♥ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Tingling or pins and needles in the hands, feet, or face. It usually settles, and going up slowly reduces it.
- Trouble finding words or feeling mentally slow. A slower increase, or a lower amount, usually fixes this well.
- Sleepiness and tiredness. Taking more of the day's amount at bedtime often clears the daytime heaviness.
- Weight loss and lower appetite. Eat on a schedule rather than by hunger if the pounds are coming off too fast.
- Dizziness in the first weeks. Stand up in stages and hold a rail on stairs until your balance settles again.
- Sweating less than usual, especially in children. In the heat, take breaks, drink water, and cool off early.

⚠ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Go to the **ER** for sudden eye pain, redness, or blurred vision, which can mean dangerous eye pressure.
- Call the same day for severe back or side pain with bloody urine, which can mean a kidney stone.
- Fast breathing, unusual tiredness, or confusion can mean acid buildup. Call your prescriber right away.
- If thoughts of suicide appear, call or text **988** and tell your prescriber the same day.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- This medicine can cause **cleft lip and palate** in a baby. Use reliable birth control and plan any pregnancy in advance.
- At higher amounts it can weaken the pill, so ask your prescriber whether you need a second method of birth control.
- Alcohol adds to the sleepiness and fog, and one form should not be taken within **6 hours** of drinking at all.
- Do not drive or use machines while your dose is going up or while you feel slowed or dizzy.
- Getting overheated is risky, since you sweat less on this medicine. Skip hot yoga and long midday workouts.

⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop suddenly. Abrupt stops can trigger seizures, even in people taking this only for migraine.
- Your prescriber will taper it over **at least 2 to 3 weeks**, and longer if you have a seizure disorder.
- If word-finding trouble is why you want off, say so first. A lower amount often keeps the benefit without the fog.
- If you stop for a planned pregnancy, do it with your prescriber ahead of time, not once a test is positive.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How fast will we raise the dose, and what if the tingling bothers me?
- How much water should I drink to lower my chance of kidney stones?
- Does this medicine affect my birth control at the amount I take?
- When will we decide whether this is preventing enough attacks?

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.