

Medicines for Children: information for parents and carers

Diazepam for muscle spasm



This leaflet is about the use of diazepam for painful muscle spasm and stiffness. This may be due to cerebral palsy or other conditions.

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Do not stop giving diazepam suddenly, as this may cause serious side-effects.

Name of drug

Diazepam

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Diazepam will help your child's muscles to relax. This should help to reduce muscle pain.

What is diazepam available as?

- Tablets (2 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg)
- Liquid medicine (2 mg or 5 mg in 5 mL)


When should I give diazepam?

Give your child two doses each day. This is usually one in the morning and one in the evening. Ideally these times should be 10–12 hours apart, for example between 7 and 8 am, and between 7 and 8 pm.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of diazepam (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

It may take a while to find the right dose that relaxes the muscles but without making your child floppy. You and your doctor will work out the right dose together.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.**

How should I give diazepam?



Tablets should be swallowed with a glass of water, juice or similar. Your child should not chew the tablets.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using a medicine spoon or oral syringe. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When should the medicine start working?

Your child should start to feel less muscle pain about 15 minutes after taking a dose of diazepam.

The muscles will start to relax when your child has been taking diazepam regularly for a few days.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after taking a dose of diazepam, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after taking a dose of diazepam, you do not need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

What if I forget to give it?

If you forget to give a dose of diazepam, give it as soon as you remember. BUT, if the next normal dose is due within 4 hours, do not give this next dose, as you risk giving your child too much. Then return to your normal dosing times.

For example, imagine that you usually give diazepam to your child at about 8 am and 8 pm. If you forget to give the morning dose but remember before 4 pm (i.e. 4 hours before the evening dose is due), give them the morning dose and give them the evening dose at 8 pm, as usual. BUT, if you remember the morning dose after 4 pm, give that missed dose when you remember, but **do not** give the usual evening dose. Return to your normal dosing routine in the morning.

What if I give too much?

- It can be dangerous to give too much diazepam.



If you think you may have given your child too much diazepam, contact your doctor or take your child to hospital **straight away**.

- Tell the doctor that they may have had too much diazepam. Take the medicine or packet with you, so that the doctor can see what has been taken. Have the packet with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children feel better, but sometimes they have unwanted effects (side-effects).

Side-effects that you must do something about



If your child is very sleepy, or if they have problems breathing, they may have had too much diazepam. **Take them to hospital straight away.**


Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may be more sleepy than usual. This will get better when they have been taking diazepam for a few days.
- If your child becomes floppy, they may be taking too much diazepam. Contact your doctor if this happens.
- Your child may have difficulty controlling their movements (ataxia) or walking, may develop difficulty talking, become irritable or show odd behaviour, or they may feel light-headed (as if they may faint). Diazepam may make these symptoms worse in children who already have them. Contact your doctor if this happens.

Can other common medicines be given at the same time as diazepam?

- Diazepam can make your child sleepy, so do not give your child any other drugs that also have this effect, such as some medicines for hay fever.
- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.


Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

 Do not stop giving diazepam suddenly, as this can cause severe side-effects.

- You may have heard that some people become addicted to or dependent on diazepam. This is unlikely to happen when diazepam is given to children for pain or spasms.
- An antidote can be given to someone who has had too much diazepam. This has to be done in hospital.

General advice

- If diazepam does not seem to be helping your child, contact your doctor for advice. **Do not** give extra doses of diazepam.
- Only give this medicine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if they seem to have the same condition, as you are likely to do them harm.

 If you think someone else may have taken some diazepam by accident, contact your doctor **straight away** for advice.

- Try to give the medicine at about the same times each day, to help you remember.
- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine is not older than the 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep all medicines where children cannot reach them.
- Keep diazepam somewhere cool and dry, away from direct heat and light. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about diazepam and other medicines that may be used to treat pain or muscle spasm.

You can get useful information from these organisations.

Scope (for people living with cerebral palsy)
www.scope.org.uk
0808 800 3333

NHS Direct
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
0845 4647

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

WellChild 
the national charity for sick children

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We have written this leaflet to help you understand more about the medicine you are giving to your child. We take great care to make sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is therefore important that you follow the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, as they understand your child's illness. If you are not sure about something, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Note that this leaflet applies to the use of medicines in the UK; it may not apply in other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), The Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading the leaflet.