



# Lofepramine

(Pronounced low-fep-ra-meen)

## Why has lofepramine been prescribed?

Lofepramine is an antidepressant. These medications are prescribed to treat depression and anxiety.

## What are the benefits of taking lofepramine?

Antidepressants are effective in reducing the severity of the symptoms of depression. They also shorten the time to recovery and prevent depression returning.

## Are there any precautions with lofepramine?

Lofepramine is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe lofepramine, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) If you have epilepsy, diabetes, glaucoma, phaeochromocytoma, porphyria or suffer from heart, liver, kidney, thyroid or prostate trouble or long term constipation.
- b) If you are taking any other medication especially anticoagulants such as warfarin, medication for Parkinson's disease, medication for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, medication for anxiety or insomnia, medication for high blood pressure or irregular heart beat, cimetidine, rifampicin, HIV medications, anticonvulsants, antidepressants or strong pain killers, oestrogens (in oral contraceptives and HRT) and sub-lingual (under the tongue) nitrates. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines. St John's Wort should not be taken by patients prescribed lofepramine.
- c) If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.
- d) If you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient of lofepramine tablets (but not in the liquid).

## What is the usual dose of lofepramine?

The starting dose is usually 70mg twice a day. The dose is then usually slowly increased. The usual dose of lofepramine may be between 140mg and 210mg daily. It may take some time to get to the dose that is most suitable.

## How should lofepramine be taken?

Lofepramine is usually taken twice a day or as a single dose at night. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

## What form does lofepramine come in?

Lofepramine is available as tablets and liquid. The tablets are available as 70mg and the liquid as 70mg per 5ml.

## What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the next day's dose. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

## What will happen when lofepramine is first taken?

Lofepramine, like many medicines, does not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. To begin with, some people find that lofepramine may help them feel more calm and relaxed. Later, (usually in two to three weeks) other symptoms should begin to improve. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

## Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0808 100 3352 or go to [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

## Is lofepramine addictive?

Lofepramine is not addictive, but if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings. Symptoms are fairly common and include nausea, insomnia, diarrhoea, excess salivation and anxiety. Reducing the dose of lofepramine slowly may make these symptoms less severe.

## What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking lofepramine should not drink alcohol. This is because both antidepressants and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make depression and anxiety worse. However, once people are used to taking medication, then *very small amounts* of alcohol may not be harmful. It pays to be very careful, because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

## Is it OK to stop taking lofepramine when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking lofepramine, your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to remain on lofepramine for at least six months after they have fully recovered. You should always discuss with your prescriber any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines.

## Are there any alternatives to lofepramine?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although antidepressants have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are more than 20 antidepressants available so most people can find one which suits them. Psychological therapies can also help in some types of depression, either as an alternative to medication or alongside it.

## Summary of side effects



### Constipation – Very common

#### What can be done about it?

Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. Your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.



### Dry mouth - Common

#### What can be done about it?

This should wear off within a few days. Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.



### Blurred vision - Common

#### What can be done about it?

This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. It may be necessary to switch to another medication. Symptoms will go away when switched to another medication.



### Postural hypotension – Common (low blood pressure)

#### What can be done about it?

Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy do not drive. This dizziness is not dangerous and should wear off after a few days.

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Insomnia or disturbed sleep	<b>Uncommon</b> This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Sweating	<b>Uncommon</b> Discuss this with your prescriber if it becomes troublesome.
Tachycardia (palpitations)	<b>Uncommon</b> Contact your prescriber if you experience palpitations.

Sexual dysfunction - Reduced libido (desire) and lack of orgasm in males and females. Impotence in males	<b>Rare</b> Any changes should be reported to your prescriber. It may be necessary to switch to another medication. Symptoms should go away when switched to another medication.
Urinary retention (difficulty passing water)	<b>Rare</b> Contact your prescriber if you have any difficulty passing water.

Very common = almost everyone affected  
Common = many people affected  
Uncommon = some people affected

Rare = few people affected  
Very rare = very few or no one affected

## Disclaimer

This leaflet does not replace the official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information, visit [www.slam.nhs.uk/meds](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/meds) or speak to a health care professional.

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