



## Medication List of Commonly Prescribed Medications for headache/migraine prevention - What you REALLY need to know about side effects.

*As with most medications, avoid in pregnancy. Nearly all side effects anyone can think of are listed on most medications, but very few of the side effects listed actually occur in real life, especially at the low doses we use for headache prevention. Listed below are the side effects that are occasionally reported.*

Nortriptyline (Pamelor) comes in 10, 25, 50 and 75 mg capsules: A tricyclic antidepressant - no longer used as an antidepressant, but commonly used for headache and pain prevention. Side effects may include dry mouth, vivid dreams and drowsiness. Rarely, weight gain, palpitations, mood change. Avoid in glaucoma and orthostatic hypotension. Larger doses require EKG monitoring.

Amatriptyline (Elavil) comes in 10, 25, 50, 75, 100 and 150 mg tablets: A tricyclic antidepressant - no longer used as an antidepressant, but commonly used for headache, pain prevention and a sleep aid. Side effects may include drowsiness (more so than Pamelor and is also used to treat insomnia), dry mouth, vivid dreams. Rarely, weight gain, palpitations, mood change. Avoid in glaucoma and orthostatic hypotension. Larger doses require EKG monitoring.

Verapamil (Calan) SR comes in 120, 180, 240, 300, 360 mg tablets and capsules: A calcium channel blocker blood pressure medication commonly prescribed for headache prevention. Side effects include constipation and edema (fluid retention) in the hands or feet. Rarely palpitations. Need to consult cardiologist if underlying arrhythmia.

Propranolol (Inderal) SR comes in 60, 80, 120 and 160 mg capsules: A beta-blocker blood pressure medication commonly prescribed for headache prevention. It should be avoided in diabetes and asthma/emphysema. Consider using also to help anxiety or tremor. Side effects include fatigue, cold feet/hands, insomnia and impotence.

Valproic Acid (Depakote) ER comes in 250 and 500 mg tablets: An anti-seizure medication commonly prescribed for headache prevention. Avoid in young women as it is associated with neural tube defects, but if it must be used, birth control and folate 4 mg daily recommended. Side effects include drowsiness, hair loss, weight gain, nausea and tremor.

Topiramate (Topamax) comes in 25, 50, 100 and 200 mg tablets: An anti-seizure medication commonly prescribed for headache prevention. Side effects include tingling in the hands and feet, altered taste (especially for carbonated beverages) and decreased appetite (weight loss). Rarely, slowed thinking ("Dopamax"), kidney stones, reduced sweating (caution in heat), and glaucoma. Anyone noting a blurring of vision after taking Topamax, should take no more and have their eye pressures checked immediately.

Gabapentin (Neurontin) comes in 100, 300, 400, 600 and 800 mg tablets and capsules: An anti-seizure medication prescribed for pain prevention. Side effects include drowsiness. Reduced doses may be needed with kidney disease.

Pregabalin (Lyrica) comes in 25, 50, 75, 100, 150, 200, 225 and 300 mg capsules start 75 mg bid up to 300 mg bid. Side effects include muscle pain and edema (fluid retention) in the hands or feet.

Levetiracetam (Keppra) comes in 250, 500, 750 and 1,000 mg and XR 500 and 750 mg: An anti-seizure medication used second line for prevention of headaches. Side effects include emotional changes.