

Gemfibrozil: Lower Your Triglycerides



Losing weight, being more physically active, and changing your diet all help lower cholesterol. But sometimes, you need the help of medications like gemfibrozil (*Lopid*) in addition to a healthy lifestyle.

How does gemfibrozil work?

Gemfibrozil (*Lopid*) lowers total cholesterol and triglycerides and may raise HDL (good cholesterol). Gemfibrozil works by decreasing the amount of fat made by the liver. Taking medication to reduce cholesterol will decrease your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. This drug also helps to prevent pancreatitis in people with very high blood levels of triglycerides.

What problems could I have taking gemfibrozil?

Most people who take this medication don't have any problems. Some people do have:

- **Mild** stomach bloating, nausea, diarrhea, gas, heartburn, or rash. These usually go away in one to two weeks. If they continue or bother you, call your health care provider or other medical professional.

- **Call** if you have severe stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, lower back or side pain, cough or hoarseness, fever or chills, painful or difficult urination, unusual tiredness or weakness, or muscle pain. Stop taking gemfibrozil and call your health care provider immediately.
- Women who are breastfeeding should not take gemfibrozil.
- Tell your doctor or other health care provider if you have liver, kidney, or gallbladder disease.

Will taking gemfibrozil affect my other medications?

- If you are taking warfarin (*Coumadin*), tell your care manager or health care professional. You will need to take a simple blood test because the *Coumadin* level in your body may change when you are taking gemfibrozil.
- You may need to take gemfibrozil with other medications, such as simvastatin (*Zocor*), niacin (*Niaspan*), or nefazodone (*Serzone*). These combinations may cause muscle aches. If this happens, tell your care manager or health care professional immediately.

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What sort of follow up will I need?

You will need to get regular cholesterol and liver blood tests to make sure gemfibrozil is working to lower your cholesterol and isn't irritating your liver.

How should I take gemfibrozil?

Take ____ mg tablets of gemfibrozil ____ time(s) a day, for a total of ____ mg a day.

What do I need to know about my medications?

Before you leave the clinic, take the time to ask your doctor or member of your health care team about your medications. Ask:

- Why am I taking them?
- How often and how long should I take them?
- Are there any special instructions for taking this medication?
- Should I always take medications at mealtime?
- Are there activities that I should avoid while taking any medication?
- What kind of side effects could I have? What symptoms should I look for?
- How can I avoid side effects?

What should I do if I have side effects?

Be sure to tell your doctor if there are reasons why you can't take any medication that's prescribed. Also, tell your doctor if you are having trouble remembering to take your medication.

How can I remember to take my medications?

We all have a hard time adjusting to new routines in our lives. These tips work for others; maybe they can help you too.

- Make a simple chart and post it someplace where you will see it every day, like the bathroom mirror.
- Set your alarm clock, watch, or computer as a reminder.
- Take medications at the same time every day: before bed, at mealtime, or at the beginning of a TV show you watch every day, such as the evening news.
- Use a pillbox that has seven sections, one for each day of the week.
- Record your medications on a wallet card or calendar.
- Can you think of others?

Additional resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and more.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.