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Baclofen for chronic muscle spasm (Lyflex, Lioresal)

When you start this treatment, your doctor will give you a small dose and then gradually increase it. This is to reduce side-effects such as drowsiness.

Take baclofen with a meal or a snack, and try not to miss any doses.

The most common side-effects are feeling sleepy and problems with mobility.

About baclofen

Type of medicine	Skeletal muscle relaxant
Used for	To relieve muscle spasms
Also called	Lyflex®; Lioresal®
Available as	Tablets, oral liquid and injection

Long-term (chronic) muscle stiffness can occur in [multiple sclerosis](#) and in conditions where there has been damage to nerves that supply muscles. In these conditions, the muscles shorten (contract) tightly, and can then become stiff and harder to use. This is called muscle spasticity.

Baclofen works by relaxing the muscles, which reduces pain and discomfort.

Before taking baclofen

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking baclofen it is important that your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding.
- If you have ever had a stomach ulcer.
- If you have kidney or liver problems, or an 'overactive' bladder.
- If you have ever had a [stroke](#), or if the blood vessels to your brain are narrowed by cerebrovascular disease.
- If you have [high blood pressure \(hypertension\)](#).
- If you have [epilepsy](#), [Parkinson's disease](#) or [diabetes](#).
- If you have any mental health problems.
- If you have problems with your breathing.
- If you have ever had problems with drug or alcohol misuse.
- If you are taking or using any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

How to take baclofen

- Before you start this treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside your pack. The leaflet will give you more information about baclofen and a full list of side-effects which you may experience from taking it.
- When starting this treatment, your doctor will give you a small dose (usually half a tablet three times daily) and then gradually increase your dose every three days or so. This allows your doctor to make sure that you have the dose that helps your condition and avoids any unwanted symptoms.

- Take the tablets exactly as your doctor tells you to. Your dose will be on the label of the pack to remind you.
- When baclofen is prescribed for a child, it is likely that a liquid medicine will be supplied. Check the directions on the label carefully, as the dose will depend upon their body weight.
- Take baclofen with a snack or just after eating a meal.
- Try to take your doses at the same times of day each day, as this will help you to remember to take them. If you do forget to take a dose, skip the missed dose but remember to take your next dose when it is due. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Try to keep your regular appointments with your doctor. This is so your doctor can check on your progress.
- Baclofen may cause drowsiness and eyesight problems. If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines until you feel better.
- If your muscle spasms increase or if you have difficulty doing things because you feel your muscles have become weak, let your doctor know about this, as your dose may need adjusting.
- It is recommended that you do not drink alcohol while you are on baclofen. This is because it increases the chance that you will experience side-effects such as feeling sleepy or dizzy.
- Treatment with baclofen is usually long-term, so keep taking these tablets unless your doctor tells you otherwise. Suddenly stopping treatment can cause problems, so your doctor is likely to want you to reduce your dose gradually if this is necessary.
- If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.
- If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are safe to take with your other medicines.

Can baclofen cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with baclofen. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Common baclofen side-effects	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling sleepy, tired, dizzy or weak	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines
Feeling sick (nausea), upset stomach or loose, watery stools (diarrhoea)	Drink plenty of water and stick to simple foods - avoid rich or spicy meals
Headache	Drink plenty of water and ask a pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headaches continue, let your doctor know
Dry mouth	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets
Mobility problems, eyesight problems, breathing difficulties, aching muscles, sleeping difficulties, mood changes, confusion, needing to pass urine more often, feeling shaky or faint, increased sweating, and rash	If any of these become troublesome, discuss them with your doctor

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

How to store baclofen

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Lioresal® Tablets 10 mg](#); Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated February 2022.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Lioresal® Liquid 5 mg/5 ml](#); Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated September 2021.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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