

Lofexidine tablets (BritLofex)

Clinical author's note Michael Stewart 01/03/2022: BritLofex® tablets were discontinued in the UK in October 2018. At the time of review there are no branded or generic products containing lofexidine available in the UK. Lofexidine may still be available in other countries. This medicine leaflet is based on medical information available in the UK at the time of writing and is left here for reference purposes. Please also refer to the manufacturer's information supplied with your medicine.

It is usual to take four tablets over the first day. Your dose will then be increased over the next few days to suit your needs. A course of treatment usually lasts 7-10 days.

The main side-effects are dizziness, dry mouth and feeling sleepy.

At the end of your treatment your dose will be reduced gradually over a few days. Do not stop taking lofexidine suddenly, as this can cause your blood pressure to rise suddenly which could be harmful.

About lofexidine

Type of medicine	An alpha-adrenergic agonist medicine
Used for	Reducing withdrawal symptoms during opioid detoxification (such as heroin, morphine or dihydrocodeine detox)
Also called	BritLofex® (discontinued)
Available as	Tablets

Lofexidine is a treatment for opioid drug dependence. Medicines for drug dependence are mainly used to reduce or prevent withdrawal symptoms while trying to break drug use.

Lofexidine is usually used alongside, but sometimes instead of, other medicines taken for opioid drug dependence such as methadone or buprenorphine. It helps to reduce withdrawal effects such as chills, sweating, stomach cramps, muscle pain, difficulties sleeping and runny nose.

Before taking lofexidine

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

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you have a heart condition, or if you have had a heart attack, or if you have a heart rhythm problem such as a slow or irregular heartbeat.
- If you have low blood pressure.
- If you have had a stroke or 'mini-stroke' (also known as a transient ischaemic attack, or TIA).

- If you are feeling depressed.
 - If you have any problems with the way your kidneys work.
 - 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.
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How to take lofexidine

- Lofexidine is used as part of a detoxification programme. Because each programme is tailored to meet a person's individual needs and no two detoxifications are exactly the same, it is important that you take lofexidine exactly as your doctor tells you to.
- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about lofexidine, and will also provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you could experience from taking it.
- Your doctor or community drug-team worker will tell you when and how often to take the tablets. It is likely that you will be asked to take four tablets over the course of the first day. Take your last dose of the day at bedtime, as this will help to reduce any problems you may have sleeping. Your dose may then be increased over the next few days. The maximum number of tablets you will be prescribed to take at any one time is 4, and the maximum number of tablets during any one day is 12.
- You can take lofexidine tablets either before or after meals. Swallow the tablets whole with a drink of water.
- If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember and then continue as before. Do not take two doses together to make up for a missed dose.

- It is usual to take lofexidine for around 7–10 days, although sometimes a course of treatment can be for longer than this. You should not stop taking lofexidine suddenly, as this can cause your blood pressure to rise quickly which could be harmful. At the end of the treatment, your doctor will ask you to reduce your dose gradually over a few days to prevent this from happening.

Getting the most from your treatment

- It is important that you keep your regular appointments with your doctor/clinic so that your progress can be reviewed. Your blood pressure and pulse rate will need to be regularly monitored (especially in the first few days) to make sure you are taking a dose which helps your condition but avoids unwanted symptoms.
- Lofexidine will help you to deal with withdrawal symptoms but it will not help you through cravings. You are more likely to succeed in breaking your drug habit if you have support and counselling. Local drug community teams, self-help groups and other agencies can be of help. It is much harder to 'do it alone', so go for counselling and help if it is available in your area. Try to stay positive and relaxed, drink plenty of fluids, and eat a light diet.
- You should not drink alcohol while you are on lofexidine because it can increase side-effects such as feeling sleepy or dizzy.

Can lofexidine cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains the most common ones associated with lofexidine. 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.

Very common lofexidine side-effects (these affect more than 1 in 10 people)	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling dizzy or sleepy	If you feel dizzy, sit down for a while until you feel better. It is important you do not drive and do not use tools or machines while affected. Do not drink alcohol
Dry mouth and throat	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets
Slow heart rate, low blood pressure	Your doctor will check for this

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

How to store lofexidine

- 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.

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.

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

Never 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

- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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