

## Patient information sheet: Baclofen

### What type of drug is it?

Baclofen belongs to a group of medicines called muscle relaxants. They work by acting on the central nervous system (rather than the muscles themselves) to help reduce muscle spasms, cramping or tightness. It is particularly used a lot in people with spinal cord injuries who develop spasms from the damaged nerves.

### Is it safe?

Baclofen has been used successfully in thousands of patients without concern for many years. So we can make sure Baclofen is safe for you it is important that you have told your pain specialist/GP about any other medications you are currently taking or recently taken, including those you buy over the counter in a chemist and any medical problems that you may have or previously suffered from. In particular, you should tell them if you are taking any medications to lower your blood pressure, any diuretics (water tablets), medications to help you sleep, or suffer from or have had, gastritis or a stomach ulcer.

### Are there any side effects?

Like with all medicines, Baclofen tablets can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. They occur mainly at the start of treatment or if the dose is too high and they often stop with continued treatment or with a reduction in the dose. Most people can take this drug without side effects being a problem. The most common of these are feeling nauseous and tired during the day. Less commonly you may suffer with a dry mouth, constipation, diarrhoea, headache, dizziness and mental clouding. You can try to manage some of these side effects using simple tips.

- Feeling sick (nausea) - Try avoiding rich or spicy meals and sticking to simple foods, taking Baclofen with or after some food can also help.
- Dry mouth – Try chewing gum, this promotes the production of saliva in the mouth.
- Constipation – Drink more non-alcoholic drinks, eat more fibre containing fruits and vegetables.
- Headaches, diarrhoea and constipation – Try asking your Pharmacist for suitable treatments.

Because alcohol can increase the drowsiness effects of Baclofen it is best avoided as it can make you very sleepy. If these tablets make you feel drowsy, dizzy or less alert do not drive or use any tools or machinery. If any of the side effects become a problem whilst you are increasing your dose, cut back to a dose you can tolerate for a week, and then try again to increase the dose again. If necessary, you can break the tablets in half to give you a 5mg dose.

### How will it help me?

Baclofen often helps with chronic pain especially back pain, because often some of the pain stems from tight muscles. Many people find that it helps to ease the pain and help with their ability to undertake their normal daily activities and exercises. The main purpose of using Baclofen is to keep as active and mobile as possible.

### How should I take it?

The dosage regime will be tailored to each patient but Baclofen is usually started at a dose of 10mg. It may be prescribed once, twice or three times a day. Usually, we start with a fairly low dose and

increase it gradually to reduce side effects. If your pain is not reduced on the dose you start on, you may increase the dose gradually. We normally recommend that you increase to a maximum of 10mg three times a day.

If you or your doctor decide it would be best to stop taking Baclofen it is recommended to slowly reduce your dose and NOT to stop abruptly, always speak to your pain specialist or GP first.

**Who do I contact with queries or concerns?**

The information in this leaflet is to guide your use of Baclofen safely. Further information is available inside the medication package.

If you have any further questions or concerns about taking this medicine please contact your prescribing GP or dispensing pharmacist.