

ERGOTAMINE

Brand names None

Used in the following combined preparations Cafergot, Migril

GENERAL INFORMATION

Ergotamine is used to treat migraine attacks, but its use has largely been superseded by newer agents with fewer adverse effects. It may also be used in the prevention of cluster headaches. For migraine, it should be restricted to when other treatments are ineffective, and it should be taken only at the first sign of migraine (the "aura"); later use may be ineffective and cause stomach upset.

Ergotamine causes temporary narrowing of blood vessels and, therefore should not be used by people with poor circulation. If taken too frequently, the drug can dangerously reduce circulation to the hands and feet; it should never be taken regularly. Frequent migraine attacks may indicate the need for a drug to prevent migraine.

QUICK REFERENCE

Drug group Drug for migraine (p.45)

Overdose danger rating Medium

Dependence rating Medium

Prescription needed Yes

Available as generic Yes

INFORMATION FOR USERS

Your drug prescription is tailored for you. Do not alter dosage without checking with your doctor.

How taken/used



Tablets, suppositories.

Frequency and timing of doses

Once at the onset, repeated if needed after 30 minutes (tablets) up to the maximum dose (see below).

Adult dosage range

Varies according to product. Generally, 1–2mg per dose. Take no more than 4mg in 24 hours or 8mg in 1 week. Treatment should not be repeated within 4 days or more than twice a month.

Onset of effect

15–30 minutes.

Duration of action

Up to 24 hours.

Diet advice

Changes in diet are unlikely to affect the action of this drug, but certain foods may provoke migraine attacks in some people.

Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children. Protect from light.

Missed dose

Regular doses of this drug are not necessary and may be dangerous. Take only when you have symptoms of migraine.

Stopping the drug

Can be safely stopped as soon as you no longer need it.

Exceeding the dose

An occasional unintentional extra dose is unlikely to cause problems. Large overdoses may cause vomiting, thirst, diarrhoea, dizziness, seizures, or coma. Notify your doctor immediately.

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have long-term liver or kidney problems.
- You have heart problems.
- You have poor circulation.
- You have high blood pressure.
- You have had a recent stroke.
- You have an overactive thyroid gland.
- You have anaemia.
- You are taking other medicines.



Pregnancy

Not prescribed. Ergotamine can cause contractions of the uterus.



Breast-feeding

Not recommended. The drug passes into the milk and may have adverse effects on the baby. It may also reduce your milk supply.



Infants and children

Not usually prescribed.



Over 60

Not recommended. May aggravate existing heart or circulatory problems.



Driving and hazardous work

Avoid such activities until you have learned how ergotamine affects you because the drug can cause dizziness.



Alcohol

No special problems, but some spirits may provoke migraine in some people.

Surgery and general anaesthetics

Notify your doctor if you have used ergotamine within 48 hours prior to surgery.

POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Digestive disturbances and nausea (for which an anti-emetic may be given) are common

with ergotamine treatment. Rare but serious adverse effects may result from arterial spasm.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Nausea/vomiting	●		●			
Abdominal pain	●		●			
Muscle cramps	●		●			
Diarrhoea		●	●			
Dizziness		●		●		
Muscle pain/stiffness		●		●		
Chest pain		●		●	●	●
Leg/groin pain		●		●	●	●
Cold/numb fingers/toes		●		●	●	●

INTERACTIONS

Beta blockers These drugs may increase circulatory problems with ergotamine.

Sumatriptan and related drugs There is an increased risk of adverse effects on the blood circulation if ergotamine is used with these drugs.

Erythromycin and related antibiotics and antivirals taken with ergotamine increase the likelihood of adverse effects.

Oral contraceptives There is an increased risk of blood clotting in women taking these drugs with ergotamine.

PROLONGED USE

Reduced circulation to the hands and feet may result if doses near to the maximum are taken for too long. The recommended dosage and length of treatment should not be exceeded. Rebound headache may occur if it is taken too frequently.