

Topiramate

How it works:

Topiramate acts by calming your nervous system. Using topiramate to help with drinking has not been approved by Health Canada. Your doctor or nurse is allowed to prescribe it, and this is called “off-label”.

What to Expect:

- Many people find that topiramate has side effects. To reduce the chance of side effects, your provider may increase your dose of topiramate very slowly over 5-8 weeks.
 - Some people find they have good outcomes with therapy, such as counselling or mutual support groups (AA or SMART Recovery), plus a lower dose of topiramate (less than 100 mg)
 - Some people find that being self-motivated to quit or cut back, instead of doing it for someone else, can be more successful.
 - You and your health care provider will work together to determine how long to take topiramate.
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Side effects:

- Side effects are common, especially at higher doses of topiramate
- Most common: difficulty concentrating, tiredness, pins and needles
- Less common: dizziness, itching, nervousness.

Why choose topiramate?

- Helps reduce heavy drinking and helps people stay abstinent.
 - Safe for people with liver disease.
 - Doesn't make you feel sick if you drink while on this medication.
 - Can be tried if other medications like acamprosate or naltrexone didn't work for you.
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Dosage:

- Topiramate is usually taken 2 times a day.
 - During the 1st week, you will start at 25mg once a day.
 - During the 2nd and 3rd week, you will take 25mg 2 times a day.
 - During the 3rd and 4th week, you will take 50mg 2 times a day. The total dose is 100mg per day.
 - You may take more or less than 100mg, depending on what works best for you.
 - Topiramate is available as a tablet or a capsule. The capsule can be opened and sprinkled onto soft food. This makes it easier for some people to swallow.
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Risks:

- Topiramate is not recommended if:
 - You have a severe type of glaucoma called narrow angle.
 - You have kidney stones.
 - You are pregnant.
 - Your provider may check on you for signs of liver or kidney issues that can be caused by topiramate.
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Cost:

Topiramate in the tablet form is covered in most provinces. The sprinkle capsules have limited coverage in some provinces. Check your plan to find out the details of the cost and coverage.
