

# Flunarizine (Sibelium®)

## What is flunarizine?

Flunarizine belongs to a group of medicines called antihistamines; it is also a calcium channel blocker medicine. Flunarizine can help to dilate blood vessels and therefore may improve blood supply to various parts of the body, for example to areas of the brain. Flunarizine is only available with a doctor's prescription.

## What is it for?

Flunarizine has been used to prevent or lessen symptoms in conditions such as:

- migraine
- seizures
- cerebral ischemia (a shortage of blood to areas of the brain)
- cerebral vasculopathy (abnormal blood vessel structure in the brain)
- infantile hemiplegia (partial paralysis due to irregular blood flow in the brain)
- dizziness, caused by a disturbance to the balance system in the ear
- other neurological conditions where the brain may not receive a normal blood supply and may lack oxygen.

## How to take this medication

It is important this medication is taken exactly as the doctor recommends. This is to achieve the best results and to lessen any possible side effects.

Your child's doctor may start your child on a low dose of flunarizine and slowly increase the dose to the lowest amount needed to control your child's condition.

Flunarizine may be prescribed by your doctor to be given as a single daily dose or divided into 2 or more doses per day. It may be given with or without food and should be swallowed with a glass of water. When this medication is first started it may take a couple of weeks for its full effect to be reached.

Flunarizine is available as a 10mg tablet that can be halved and quartered, or it is available as a 5mg capsule.

## What to do if a dose is missed

If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and give the next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, give the medication as soon as you remember and then go back to giving the medicine as usual.

Do not try to make up for missed dose(s) by giving more than one dose at a time. This can increase the risk of unwanted side effects.



## Storing the medication

It is important to keep flunarizine locked away out of the reach of children. Do not keep the tablets/capsules in the bathroom, near the kitchen sink or in other damp, warm places because this may make them less effective.

## Use of other medication

Flunarizine can interact with a number of other medications so it is important to advise your doctor or pharmacist before giving any other medication. This includes medicines that you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.

Flunarizine must be used with care when given in combination with other medications that may cause drowsiness, such as antihistamines, sedatives and some anti-epileptic medications.

## Important information

Flunarizine may not be suitable for patients with certain movement disorders or depression. Your doctor will determine if this medication is appropriate for you.

Flunarizine may make your child sleepy or dizzy. **Your child should avoid activities such as riding bikes or climbing trees or anything else dangerous until you know how this medicine will affect them.**

## Possible side-effects

Flunarizine may cause side effects. Some of them may disappear with time or after the dose has been adjusted. Others are more serious and require you check with the doctor.

Side effects may include:

- drowsiness, dizziness, weakness
- increased appetite and weight gain
- visual disturbance
- nausea, stomach-ache, dry mouth
- red, swollen gums
- headache, irritability, insomnia
- depression
- movement disorders, tremor.

Tell your child's doctor **as soon as possible** if you notice any of the following:

- excessive sleepiness or muscle weakness
- agitation
- increased heartbeat
- signs of allergy such as swelling of face or other parts of the body, difficulty breathing and skin rash.

## Commercially available dosage forms and strengths

- 10mg tablets
- 5mg capsules

Your hospital pharmacy will advise you if they manufacture any additional dosage forms to the above.

*Flunarizine is not licensed for marketing in Australia at present. The Pharmacy Department at Perth Children's Hospital will import flunarizine tablets/capsules from overseas for approved patients.*

If you have any concerns, contact your child's doctor or PCH Pharmacy Department

Dispensary: 6456 0190 – select option 2

Paediatric Medicines Information Service: 6456 0190 – select option 1

**In case of overdose or poisoning contact the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26**



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Child and Adolescent Health Service



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Produced by: Pharmacy  
Ref: 632 © CAHS 2017 Revised 2022

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