

Starting Levodopa (Co-Beneldopa or Co-Careldopa)

Information for patients with Parkinson's

This leaflet is designed to help you understand your new medication. It is not a comprehensive guide to the medication. You should always read the manufacturer's patient information leaflet and speak to your doctor or Parkinson's nurse if you have any concerns prior to starting the medication.

Why have I been prescribed Levodopa?

In Parkinson's the brain does not produce enough of a chemical called Dopamine. This can result in changes in movement such as slowness, stiffness, tremor and balance issues. Levodopa is most often taken as an oral medication in combination with another medicine to help increase the Dopamine levels in your brain. It is intended to try and improve your movement.

Levodopa cannot cure Parkinson's but is intended to help improve your movement for as long as you are taking it. For most patients this is a long term medication and should **NOT** be stopped suddenly.

Types of Levodopa

Levodopa describes the main class or type of medication used to treat Parkinson's. It is prescribed and given as a combination tablet with another medicine (called benserazide or carbidopa) which helps the levodopa get to your brain. It may be prescribed for you using the generic name (in bold below) or the brand name:

- **Co-beneldopa** or Madopar
- **Co-careldopa** or Sinemet

How should I start taking Levodopa?

We recommend that you start taking Levodopa medication gradually building up the dose over 3 weeks. This allows your body to gradually adjust to the new medication and in our experience, this can help to reduce some initial side effects.

Medication name: Co-beneldopa or Madopar Co-careldopa or Sinemet	Dose / Strength: 12.5/50 milligrams (mg)
Week 1:	1 tablet with breakfast
Week 2:	1 tablet with breakfast 1 tablet with lunch
Week 3:	1 tablet with breakfast 1 tablet with lunch 1 tablet with evening meal
Thereafter:	Continue with 1 tablet, three times per day, roughly 4 hours apart. Once you have been on the medication for a month, if there are no issues you should take the medication approximately 30-60 minutes before meals. Try to keep the time you take the medication roughly the same each day to help the medication work best for you.

Are there any side effects of taking levodopa?

All medications have potential side effects, and it is important for you to read the patient information leaflet that the manufacturers provide with the medication.

When starting Levodopa some patients may experience mild nausea or vomiting. In our experience this is lessened if you take the medication with food or a light snack for the first 3-4 weeks as your body adjusts to the new medication. If there are no issues during these first weeks, then we would advise that you change to take your Levodopa medication 30-60 minutes before meals as this may help it to work most effectively. Or you can take the medication with a light snack such as a cracker or biscuit if you continue to experience nausea.

Some patients may experience drowsiness, dizziness or confusion when starting Levodopa. If you experience any of these issues it is important not to drive or operate machinery. You can contact our Parkinson's team for advice if any of these issues do occur.

Allergic reactions to Levodopa are rare but if you experience any problems such as swelling of the face or lips or breathing difficulties after starting the medication please seek urgent medical attention.

When you have been taking Levodopa for a long time there are a number of potential side effects that are specific to this type of medication but are also related to the natural progression of Parkinson's:

- **Wearing off:** you may find that the effect of your medication starts to wear off before the next dose is due. This may require adjustments to your prescription.
- **Involuntary movements (dyskinesia):** this can occur with long term use of Levodopa and can lead to restless writhing or twisting movements in your body. If this occurs discuss with the Parkinson's team.
- **Impulsive and compulsive behaviours:** sometimes patients who take Levodopa can experience issues with impulse control or can feel compelled to do certain things. Please discuss this with the Parkinson's team if you have any concerns.

Who can I contact for advice?

- The patient information leaflet contained with your medication is important to read before you start the medication.
- Parkinson's UK have a comprehensive website with information for people with Parkinson's and their families and is a useful source of information particularly when you are recently diagnosed. Search the website below or scan the QR code using the camera on your smartphone:

www.parkinsons.org.uk



- The Lothian Parkinson's Nurse Specialist Service provides a range of services and support for people with Parkinson's and their families. You can contact the Parkinson's secretaries on 0131 465 9156 between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday and they can arrange for a member of the team to call you back.
- If you have any other concerns, you can contact your GP practice or NHS 111.

We hope that this information leaflet has been useful to you. If you have any questions, please contact the Lothian Parkinson's Team or discuss at your next appointment.