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Antiepileptic drugs: changing between different manufacturers' products

Summary and key messages

- Depending on which antiepileptic drug you take, your doctor and pharmacist may recommend that the medicine you receive is always made by the same manufacturer. This is because for some antiepileptic drugs, there is a chance that switching to a different manufacturer could cause loss of seizure control, or could result in side effects.
- For many antiepileptic drugs however, it is quite safe to switch between different manufacturers of a particular drug.
- In order to help doctors decide whether their patients should stick with the same manufacturer's product or whether it is safe to switch to different products, antiepileptic drugs have now been put into three groups.
- Your doctor will consider your own particular circumstances and the drug that you're taking before deciding whether to recommend that you stick with the same manufacturer's product or not.

What does this new information mean for me?

- The new guidance only relates to whether it is advisable for patients to be maintained on an antiepileptic drug made by the same manufacturer.
- If you have epilepsy and are taking anti-epileptic drugs there is no need to worry and you should continue taking your medication as usual. If any changes in your treatment are required, your doctor will discuss this with you.
- It's a good idea to write down the name and manufacturer of the drugs that you normally take for your epilepsy. Please speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about what is written on your antiepileptic drug prescription.
- If your pharmacist gives you a different antiepileptic drug from the one that you normally take and are expecting, double-check with the pharmacist to make sure that it's OK to switch.

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- The Patient Information Leaflet that comes with your antiepileptic drug gives further information about how to use it safely and any possible side effects.
- If you have any concerns about, or problems with, your antiepileptic treatment speak to a healthcare professional such as a doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.
- If you have a suspected side effect as a result of taking an antiepileptic drug, you, your carer, or your healthcare professional can report it to us on a Yellow Card (www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard). This will help us to continue to monitor safety of antiepileptic drugs and the information we give to healthcare professionals and patients to help minimise risk and maximise benefit.
- Please note that the advice contained in this sheet and the categorisation of antiepileptic drugs applies only to their use for treatment of epilepsy and does not apply to the other uses of these medicines, such as the treatment of pain.

What are the three categories of antiepileptic drugs, which doctors will now consider?

The three groups are as follows:

	Advice for doctors	Antiepileptic drugs in category
Category 1	Doctors are advised to ensure that their patient is maintained on a specific manufacturer's product	Phenytoin, carbamazepine, phenobarbital, primidone
Category 2	Doctors are advised to use their judgement (in consultation with their patient and/or their carer) to determine whether it would be advisable for them to be maintained on a specific manufacturer's product.	Valproate, lamotrigine, perampanel, retigabine, rufinamide, clobazam, clonazepam, oxcarbazepine, eslicarbazepine, zonisamide, topiramate
Category 3	Doctors are advised that it is usually unnecessary to ensure that their patients are maintained on a specific manufacturer's product.	Levetiracetam, lacosamide, tiagabine, gabapentin, pregabalin, ethosuximide, vigabatrin