

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

## Medication side effects - how likely are they to occur?

Unfortunately, all medicines are capable of causing side effects in some patients. Some of these side effects may be quite minor, e.g. you may feel a bit sick for a while, whilst other effects may be more serious or longer lasting. Perhaps surprisingly, some may actually be beneficial, eg. drowsiness at night.

The patient information leaflets supplied with medicines usually describe a wide range of side effects and often state how frequently each side effect may occur. For example, side effects may be described as being 'common' or 'rare', but what does this actually mean?

This leaflet has been produced by the Trust to help explain the terminology used when describing the frequency of side effects. It will also help you understand how likely you may be to suffer from them. The following table gives the frequency in words, as used by medicine manufacturers. There is then a definition of what this actually means.

<b><u>Frequency</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>
<b>Very Common</b>	If 10 people are given the medicine, at least 1 of them is likely to get this side effect.
<b>Common</b>	If 100 people are given the medicine, approximately 5 of them may get this side effect.
<b>Uncommon</b>	If 1,000 people are given the medicine, approximately 5 of them may get this side effect.
<b>Rare</b>	If 10,000 people are given the medicine, approximately 5 of them may get this side effect.
<b>Very Rare</b>	If 100,000 people are given the medicine, less than 10 of them are likely to get this side effect.

So, even if a side effect is described as 'common' this still means that approximately 95 people out of 100 will not experience it. At the other end of the scale, you are extremely unlikely, (less than 1 chance in 10,000), to experience a side effect that is described as 'very rare'.

Remember, the frequency of a side effect does not state whether you will get the side effect, or whether you will not. It also does not indicate how badly you will be affected. Some people experiencing drowsiness may be very drowsy and others just feel a bit more tired than normal. It simply gives you an idea of how likely it is to occur in an average group of patients. Even if a side effect is described as 'very common', you may never get that side effect at all.

**If you are still concerned about the possibility of side effects, do not fully understand the information you have been given or if you have other questions about the medicine you are taking, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for further more information.**

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