

# Levothyroxine

## Information for patients and families

**St. Michael's**

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### Why do I need this medicine?

Levothyroxine is a medicine used when your thyroid gland is not making enough thyroid hormone or if you had surgery to remove your thyroid gland. Levothyroxine replaces thyroid hormone so your body can work normally.

### How will I know this medicine is working for me?

Your doctor will check the level of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) in your blood to see how the levothyroxine is working. Your doctor will tell you when to have this blood test. This is normally done 4 to 8 weeks after starting levothyroxine and 4 to 8 weeks after any change in your dose.

### How do I take levothyroxine?

- Take the levothyroxine pill by mouth once a day on an empty stomach
- Take your medicine at the same time every day (the best time to take levothyroxine is either 1 hour before breakfast or 4 hours after dinner)
- Wait 1 hour after taking levothyroxine before drinking coffee
- If you miss a dose, take a double dose the next day

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have trouble taking your medicine on time. They can help set a schedule that works for you.

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Ask your healthcare provider about this information if you have questions.

Some medicines and supplements can lower how well the levothyroxine works. If you use one of the following medicines, **take it 4 hours apart** from levothyroxine:

- Multivitamins with iron, calcium or chromium
- Iron supplements
- Calcium supplements
- Antacids with calcium, aluminium or magnesium
- Simethicone (Gas-X®)
- Orlistat
- Bile acid binders (for example cholestyramine, colesevelam)
- Phosphate binders (sevelamer, lanthanum, calcium)
- Sucralfate
- Sodium polystyrene (Kayexelate®)
- Raloxifene (take it 12 hours apart)

**There may be other medicines that get in the way of levothyroxine. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of the prescriptions, supplements and over-the-counter medicines that you take.**

## **What are the side effects of levothyroxine?**

Most people don't have side effects from levothyroxine. If you are getting too much thyroid hormone, you may feel anxious, have trouble falling asleep, have a fast heartbeat, or lose weight without meaning to. Talk to your doctor if you have any of these side effects. Your levothyroxine dose may need to be lowered.

## **What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

Tell your doctor as soon as possible if you become pregnant. You need to have your thyroid hormone level checked as soon as possible and regularly during pregnancy. You need a higher dose of levothyroxine as pregnancy continues.

When you find out you are pregnant, take these steps as soon as possible:

Change levothyroxine dose to \_\_\_\_\_

Check TSH level \_\_\_\_\_

Call your doctor for more instructions.

Levothyroxine is safe to use if you are breastfeeding.