



# Common Medications

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## Considerations When Taking Any Medication:

- Always follow your physician's directions when taking any medication.
- All medications have potential side effects. Become aware of the potential side effects of the medications you take. Ask questions of your physician and/or pharmacist.
- Contact your physician if you experience any side effects.
- Inform your physician and pharmacist of all medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Although not always possible, try to use one pharmacy for all of your prescriptions.
- Never take anyone else's medication, and do not share your medication with anyone.
- Although one medication may work well for one person, it may not work for another. Finding the correct medication, or combination of medications, can be a trial-and-error process that will take time and patience.
- The medications listed on this flyer are commonly prescribed as treatments for the symptoms of ET. Currently there is no cure for ET.

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## Medications Commonly Prescribed For ET:

### **Propranolol (Inderal®)**

Propranolol is the only medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of ET and is available in immediate and long-acting formulations. Propranolol is a beta-blocker that is a drug used primarily for treating high blood pressure. Side effects of propranolol are usually mild and are more frequent at higher doses. The main side effects are decreased heart rate and blood pressure. Tell your doctor if you have heart failure, diabetes, or asthma. Patients who respond usually require a total daily dosage of 240 mg or less. Other beta-blockers such as atenolol, metoprolol, and nadolol can also be beneficial for treating ET.

### **Primidone (Mysoline®)**

Primidone is an anti-seizure medicine that can be effective in treating ET. Although it might have initial side effects such as nausea, poor balance, dizziness, fatigue, drowsiness, and flu-like symptoms, these side effects often resolve over time. To reduce the possibility of side effects, start with a small dose at bedtime (12.5 mg or one-quarter of one tablet) and gradually increase the dosage according to your doctor's instructions.

### **Clonazepam (Klonopin®), diazepam (Valium®), lorazepam (Ativan®), and alprazolam (Xanax®)**

These anti-anxiety medications may be useful in patients who do not respond to other medications or who have associated anxiety. Side effects include sleepiness, dizziness, depression, fatigue, loss of coordination, memory loss, and confusion. These drugs are usually less effective than propranolol and primidone, and they can be addictive. There is also risk of withdrawal symptoms if the drugs are stopped suddenly.

### **Topiramate (Topamax®)**

Topiramate is an anticonvulsant that has been shown to be effective in controlling tremor in some patients. Side effects include numbness or tingling, memory loss, and weight loss.

### **Gabapentin (Neurontin®)**

Gabapentin is a generally well tolerated anticonvulsant, but controlled studies have produced conflicting results regarding its efficacy in ET. At best, this drug has a very modest benefit. It is tried by patients whose tremor is unmanageable by other medications. Side effects include fatigue, slurred speech, drowsiness, impaired balance, and nausea especially when beginning drug therapy.



Essential Tremor (ET)

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(cont.)

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Miscellaneous agents:

### **Mirtazapine (Remeron®)**

Mirtazapine is an antidepressant. Due to its lack of effectiveness for the majority of patients and its significant side effects, mirtazapine is not recommended for the routine treatment of ET. Adverse effects include sleepiness, confusion, dry mouth, weight gain, frequent urination, balance and gait difficulty, nausea, and blurred vision.

### **Botulinum Toxin Injections (BOTOX®, Myobloc®)**

If medications fail, you may consider injections of botulinum toxin into the affected muscles. Botulinum toxin injections have been useful in the treatment of some patients with head and voice tremor and sometimes hand tremor. The toxin must be placed into target muscles by a trained specialist and repeat injections will be needed approximately every three months. Transient weakness of the injected muscle is a potential side effect. This treatment can be expensive, and since no botulinum toxin has been approved for ET, be sure to check with your insurance provider about coverage.

### **Alcohol**

Adults with ET often notice that responsible drinking of alcohol - having one or two drinks before dinner or at social events - reduces tremor for one to two hours. However, a more severe rebound tremor can occur after the effects of alcohol have worn off. The addicting and intoxicating effects of alcohol limit its use.

**This information on medications was reviewed by Rodger Elble, MD, PhD and Kelly E. Lyons, PhD.**

This information is not intended as medical advice or to replace your current medical therapy. Discuss your difficulties with your physician or other healthcare professional in order to help develop a well-rounded treatment plan that is right for you.

The IETF does not make medical recommendations.

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### **Our Mission:**

To provide hope to the ET community worldwide through awareness, education, support and research.