

# Summary of Product Characteristics

## 1 NAME OF THE MEDICINAL PRODUCT

Apictro 250 mg soft capsules

## 2 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE COMPOSITION

Each soft capsule contains 250 mg ethosuximide.

Excipients with known effect

Each soft capsule contains up to 9.9mg sorbitol (E 420).

For the full list of excipients, see section 6.1.

## 3 PHARMACEUTICAL FORM

Soft Capsule

Oval, yellow opaque soft capsules, size 6

## 4 CLINICAL PARTICULARS

### 4.1 Therapeutic Indications

Ethosuximide gives selective control of absence seizures (petit mal) even when complicated by grand mal seizures.

It is also indicated for myoclonic astatic epilepsy and juvenile myoclonic epilepsy of adolescents if other medicinal products are not effective and/or are not tolerated.

### 4.2 Posology and method of administration

#### Posology

*Adults, elderly patients and children over 6 years of age:*

The treatment is started at a low daily dose of 500 mg. Depending on the patient's tolerance, the dose is increased every five to seven days in increments of max. 250 mg until control is achieved with 1000 - 1500 mg daily. Occasionally 2000 mg in divided doses may be necessary.

The therapeutic plasma level of ethosuximide is normally between 40 and 100 µg/ml but the clinical response should be the criteria for the regulation of the dosage. The half-life of ethosuximide in plasma is more than 24 hours so that the daily dose can be taken as a single dose provided the medicine is well tolerated.

Higher daily doses should be taken in 2 or 3 single doses.

The probability of dose-dependent undesirable effects can be reduced by careful dosing (small initial dose at the start of treatment, gradual increase of dose) and by taking the medicinal product during or after meals.

Anti-epileptic therapies are principally long-term therapies. A specialist (neurologist, neuropaediatrician) should decide about the start, duration and discontinuation of ethosuximide on an individual basis.

In general, reduction of the dose and discontinuation of the medicinal product should not be considered before the patient has been free from seizures for 2-3 years.

The medicinal product must be discontinued by reducing the dose gradually over a period of one to two years.

Children may be allowed to outgrow the dose per kg body weight instead of adjusting the dose according to their age, however, it must be ensured that the EEC findings do not deteriorate.

#### Special populations

##### *Haemodialysis patients*

Ethosuximide is dialysable. Haemodialysis patients therefore require a supplementary dose or a modified dose regimen. During a dialysis period of four hours, 39% to 52% of the dose taken is removed.

#### *Paediatric population*

Not all posologies are possible with the soft capsules.

Children between 0 and 6 years should take Ethosuximide as oral solution, treatment of children over 6 years is the same as mentioned for adults (see beginning of 4.2).

The data available from clinical studies of the use of ethosuximide in children and adolescents are described in section 5.1.

#### Method of administration

Apictro is for oral use.

The soft capsules can be taken during or after meals with some liquid.

### **4.3 Contraindications**

Hypersensitivity to the active substance, other succinimides or to any of the excipients listed in section 6.1.

### **4.4 Special warnings and precautions for use**

If dyskinesias occur (see section 4.8), ethosuximide must be discontinued and diphenhydramine administered by the intravenous route, if required.

Special attention should be given to clinical symptoms of bone marrow damage (fever, angina, haemorrhage). It is recommended to check the blood count regularly (initially monthly, then after one year of treatment every six months) to identify potential medulla injury. At a leucocyte count of less than 3500/mm<sup>3</sup> or a granulocyte ratio of less than 25%, the dose should be reduced or the therapy discontinued. The liver enzymes should also be checked regularly.

Particular attention should also be given to patients with a history of psychiatric disorders. (see section 4.8, undesirable effects-psychiatric disorders; paranoid and hallucinatory symptoms, anxiety, agitation) may occur, therefore special caution is required when treating this group of patients with ethosuximide.

#### Suicidal ideation and behaviour

Suicidal ideation and behaviour have been reported in patients treated with anti-epileptics for several indications. A meta-analysis of randomised, placebo-controlled studies with antiepileptics also showed a slightly increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviour. The mechanism triggering this undesirable effect is unknown, and the data available do not exclude a potentially increased risk when taking ethosuximide.

Therefore, patients should be monitored for the emergence of suicidal thoughts and behaviour, and appropriate treatment should be considered. Patients (and their caregivers) should be advised to seek medical help if symptoms of suicidal thoughts or behaviour occur.

#### Severe skin reactions

Serious dermatologic reactions, including Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS) and drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS), have been reported with ethosuximide treatment. SJS and DRESS can be fatal. Patients appear to be at highest risk of these reactions early in the course of therapy, the onset of the reaction occurring in the majority of cases within the first month of treatment. Ethosuximide should be discontinued at the first appearance of signs and symptoms of severe skin reactions, such as skin rash, mucosal lesions, or any other sign of hypersensitivity.

#### *Note:*

To prevent grand mal seizures which are often associated with complex and atypical absences, ethosuximide can be used as an adjunct with other effective anti-epileptics (e.g. primidone or phenobarbital).

#### Excipients

This medicinal product contains sorbitol (E 420).

Patients with hereditary fructose intolerance (HFI) should not take this medicinal product.

### **4.5 Interaction with other medicinal products and other forms of interactions**

Effects of other medicinal products on ethosuximide

The concomitant administration of carbamazepine increases the plasma clearance of ethosuximide. Valproic acid may increase the plasma concentration of ethosuximide in most patients.

Effects of ethosuximide on other medicinal products

Ethosuximide does not normally change the plasma concentration of other anti-epileptics such as primidone, phenobarbital and phenytoin since ethosuximide is not an enzyme inducer. However, individual cases of elevated phenytoin concentration were reported when ethosuximide was administered concomitantly.

The simultaneous use of medicinal products affecting the central nervous system, alcohol or convulsion-inducing substances and ethosuximide should be avoided.

**4.6 Fertility, pregnancy and lactation**Women of childbearing potential

Women of childbearing potential should be advised by their doctor of the necessity of planning and monitoring a pregnancy before starting the treatment with ethosuximide. Patients should be advised to tell their doctor immediately if they have become pregnant during the treatment.

Pregnancy

Treatment with ethosuximide should not be interrupted during pregnancy without the consent of a physician as the sudden discontinuation of the treatment or uncontrolled reduction of the dose may result in recurrence of epileptic seizures which may harm the pregnant woman and/or the unborn child. Ethosuximide crosses the placenta. Studies in animals have shown reproductive toxicity (see section 5.3). Specific congenital malformations have not been observed in children of mothers exposed to ethosuximide monotherapy during pregnancy. The risk of malformation during an anti-epileptic therapy is increased by a factor of 2 to 3 compared to the expected incidence of about 3% in the general population. Most common malformations reported are cleft lip, cardiovascular malformations and neural tube defects. Multiple antiepileptic drug therapies are associated with a higher risk of congenital malformation so that monotherapy should be practised during pregnancy whenever possible.

Patients should be informed of the increased risk of malformations and prenatal diagnostic measures should be offered.

The lowest effective dose ensuring seizure control must not be exceeded, particularly between days 20 and 40 of pregnancy.

The ethosuximide serum concentration of the pregnant woman must be regularly monitored.

Folic acid supplementation is recommended in patients planning to have a baby and during pregnancy. To prevent vitamin K1 deficiency and reduce the risk for haemorrhages in new-born infants, women should be given vitamin K1 during the last month of pregnancy.

Breast-feeding

Ethosuximide is excreted into breast milk reaching concentrations up to 94% of the maternal serum concentrations (see section 5.2). Sedation, poor suckling and irritability have been observed in individual breast-fed infants. Breast-feeding should be discontinued during treatment with ethosuximide.

**4.7 Effects on ability to drive and use machines**

Treatment with Apictro may cause dizziness or drowsiness and thus impair reactivity. These effects can be potentiated by alcohol or in combination with other medicinal products affecting the central nervous system.

Therefore patients should not drive, operate machines or perform any other potentially hazardous activities if this occurs.

**4.8 Undesirable effects**Summary of safety profile

Severe cutaneous adverse reactions (SCARs), including Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS) and drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) have been reported in association with ethosuximide treatment (see section 4.4).

Within the therapeutic dose range undesirable effects are common and have been observed in about 1/6 of patients. These are mainly nausea, vomiting, singultus and abdominal pain.

Tabulated list of adverse reactions

The frequency of possible undesirable effects is defined using the following convention:

Very common ( $\geq 1/10$ )  
 Common ( $\geq 1/100$  to  $< 1/10$ )  
 Uncommon ( $> 1/1,000$  to  $< 1/100$ )  
 Rare ( $> 1/10,000$  to  $< 1/1,000$ )  
 Very rare ( $< 1/10,000$ )  
 Not known (frequency cannot be estimated from the available data)

#### Blood and lymphatic system disorders

Rare: Leucopenia\*, thrombocytopenia\*, agranulocytosis\*, eosinophilia\*  
 Not known: In individual cases aplastic anaemia\* and pancytopenia\* have been observed.

#### Metabolism and nutrition disorders

Uncommon: Loss of weight, loss of appetite

#### Psychiatric disorders

Uncommon: Withdrawal, anxiety, sleep disturbances  
 Rare: Paranoid and hallucinatory phenomena developing over days and weeks.

#### Nervous system disorders

Uncommon: Severe headache, ataxia, lethargy  
 Not known: A few individual cases of dyskinesia have been reported during the period of the first 12 hours after starting the treatment; it disappeared soon after discontinuation of ethosuximide..

#### Respiratory, thoracic and mediastinal disorders

Common to  
 very common: Singultus

#### Gastrointestinal disorders

Common to  
 very common: Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain  
 Uncommon: Diarrhoea, constipation

#### Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders

Rare: Lupus erythematosus of varying extent\*  
 Not known: Allergic skin reactions\* such as exanthema, but also the severe generalised form of Stevens-Johnson syndrome\* may occur.  
 Drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS)

\* Effect independent of the dose (also see section 4.4)

#### Special precautions for use

The probability of dose-dependent undesirable effects can be reduced by careful dosing (small initial dose at the start of treatment, gradual increase of dose) and by taking the medicinal product during or after meals.  
 If undesirable effects occur which are independent of the dose taken and reversible, the medicinal product should be discontinued. They may reappear when the medicinal product is taken again.

Long-term treatment may affect the patient's performance, e.g. the performance in school of children and adolescents.

#### **Reporting of suspected adverse reactions**

Reporting suspected adverse reactions after authorisation of the medicinal product is important. It allows continued monitoring of the benefit/risk balance of the medicinal product. Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse reactions via the HPRA Pharmacovigilance Website: [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie)

## **4.9 Overdose**

When evaluating an overdose, potential multiple intoxication should not be excluded e.g. several medicinal products have been taken with a suicidal intent. The symptoms of overdose are potentiated under the influence of alcohol and other CNS depressants.

#### Symptoms of intoxication

Ethosuximide has a low toxicity. The symptoms listed as undesirable effects such as tiredness, lethargy, depression and agitation and also irritability, are more frequent or severe in the case of intoxication.

If an intoxication is suspected, it is recommended to determine the plasma concentration of the antiepileptics.

#### Treatment of intoxication

Significant overdoses require initial gastric lavage and the administration of activated charcoal as well as monitoring of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems in an intensive care unit. There is no specific antidote. Haemodialysis may be useful.

## **5 PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES**

### **5.1 Pharmacodynamic properties**

Pharmacotherapeutic group: Anti-epileptics, succinimide derivatives

ATC code: N03AD01

Ethosuximide is an anti-epileptic of the class of succinimides that apparently exerts multiple mechanisms of action. . The activity of ethosuximide in absence type epilepsy seems to rely primarily on the inhibition of T-type calcium channels in the thalamus.

#### Children and adolescents

In a double-blinded, randomised study of 20 weeks duration in 453 children aged 2.5 to 13 years with newly diagnosed childhood absence epilepsy, the efficacy, tolerance and neuropsychological effects of ethosuximide, valproic acid and lamotrigine as monotherapy were studied. Those treated with either ethosuximide or valproic acid had higher freedom-from-failure rates (53% and 58%, respectively) than those given lamotrigine (29%, odds ratio with ethosuximide vs. lamotrigine, 2.66; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.65 to 4.28; odds ratio with valproic acid vs. lamotrigine, 3.34; 95% CI, 2.06 to 5.42;  $P < 0.001$  for both comparisons). In both pre-specified and post-hoc analyses, ethosuximide resulted in fewer attentional effects as compared with valproic acid (at weeks 16 and 20, the percentage of test subjects with a confidence index score of 0.60 or higher in the Conners' Continuous Performance Test was greater in the valproic acid group than in the ethosuximide group [49% vs. 33%; odds ratio, 1.95; 95% CI, 1.12 to 3.41;  $P = 0.03$ ] and the lamotrigine group [49% vs. 24%; odds ratio, 3.04; 95% CI, 1.69 to 5.49;  $P < 0.001$ ]).

### **5.2 Pharmacokinetic properties**

#### Absorption

Ethosuximide is practically completely absorbed after oral administration.  $C_{max}$  values of 18-24 µg/ml were measured after the intake of 1 g ethosuximide in three test persons after 1-4 hours.

In adults under long-term treatment at a dose of approx. 15 mg/kg body weight a plasma concentration of about 50 µg/ml was measured. At an oral dose of 1 mg/kg per day a plasma concentration of 2-3 µg/ml is to be expected.

Steady state is expected to occur 8-10 days after start of treatment. Despite significant interindividual variation of plasma concentrations at the same oral dose, dose-linear dependence of plasma concentration was established.

The therapeutic plasma concentration of ethosuximide is 40-100 µg/ml. Plasma concentrations of more than 150 µg/ml may have toxic effects.

#### Distribution

Ethosuximide is not bound to plasma proteins.

Ethosuximide is present in liquor and saliva in the same concentration as in plasma. The apparent volume of distribution is specified to be approximately 0.7 l/kg body weight.

#### Biotransformation

Ethosuximide is extensively metabolised in the liver by oxidation. Several metabolites are produced, in particular the two diastereomeres of 2-(1-hydroxyethyl)-2-methyl succinimide and of 2-ethyl-2-methyl-3-hydroxysuccinimide. The metabolites are probably inactive.

#### Elimination

Between 10% and 20% of ethosuximide is excreted unchanged in the urine. The main metabolites of ethosuximide, the two diastereomeres of 2-(1-hydroxyethyl)-2-methyl succinimide and of 2-ethyl-2-methyl-3-hydroxysuccinimide are to some extent conjugated and excreted renally as glucuronide.

After a single oral dose of 13.1-18.0 mg ethosuximide/kg body weight given to 12 male test persons (20-23 years, 57.2-114.8 kg body weight) plasma half-lives of 38.3-66.6 hours were measured.

After a single dose of 500 mg ethosuximide (capsules) given to 5 children, plasma half-lives of 25.7-35.9 hours were measured, with oral solution the plasma half-lives were 24.8-41.7 hours.

#### *Passage into breast milk*

Ethosuximide passes into breast milk; the ratio of the ethosuximide concentration of breast milk vs. plasma is specified to be  $0.94 \pm 0.06$ .

#### *Children and adolescents*

In a study in children (7-8.5 years, 12.9-24.4 kg body weight)  $C_{max}$  values of 28.0-50.9 µg/ml were measured 3-7 hours after the children had taken a single dose of 500 mg ethosuximide.

Long-term treatment of children at 20 mg/kg body weight produces a plasma concentration of approximately 50 µg/ml. In children an oral daily dose of 1 mg/kg produces a plasma concentration of 1-2 µg/ml. Therefore, younger children require a slightly higher dose than older children.

### **5.3 Preclinical safety data**

Non-clinical data reveal no special hazard for humans based on conventional studies of acute and repeated dose toxicity. Ethosuximide did not reveal a potential for mutagenicity or chromosome aberrations when studied *in vitro*.

Long-term studies of the carcinogenic potential in animals have not been performed.

Embryotoxicity studies in rats and mice revealed a higher incidence rate of malformation and changes in behaviour.

## **6 PHARMACEUTICAL PARTICULARS**

### **6.1 List of excipients**

Macrogol 300

Gelatin

Glycerol

Sorbitol liquid, partially dehydrated (E 420)

Water, purified

Titanium dioxide (E 171)

Iron oxide yellow (E 172)

### **6.2 Incompatibilities**

Not applicable.

### **6.3 Shelf life**

3 years.

### **6.4 Special precautions for storage**

Do not store above 30 °C.

### **6.5 Nature and contents of container**

PVC/PVdC//Al blister

50 soft capsules

56 soft capsules

100 soft capsules

200 soft capsules

Not all pack sizes may be marketed.

### **6.6 Special precautions for disposal**

No special requirements for disposal.

**7 MARKETING AUTHORISATION HOLDER**

Neuraxpharm Ireland Limited  
4045 Kingswood Road  
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**8 MARKETING AUTHORISATION NUMBER**

PA23229/001/001

**9 DATE OF FIRST AUTHORISATION/RENEWAL OF THE AUTHORISATION**

Date of first authorisation: 26th November 2021

**10 DATE OF REVISION OF THE TEXT**

June 2022