



Visit your doctor to talk about your health and the medicines you may need. This factsheet will give you information about a type of medicine. You will learn what questions you should ask your doctor about this medicine. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is very important for your health.

## Medicines to Treat Muscle Spasms and Pain

Do you have a lot of muscle pain? Are your muscles extremely stiff and tense? If the answer is yes, then read this factsheet to learn about two conditions that cause muscle pain and stiffness, and the medicines used to treat them.

**Muscle spasticity** is when muscles become very tight, stiff and make jerky movements. This happens because the spinal cord or parts of the brain that control the body's movements have been damaged.

For example, people who've had a stroke, or suffer from cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis, may develop muscle spasticity if these conditions have damaged their brain or spinal cord. Some people with muscle spasticity may not be able to walk, sleep, or work well. This condition lasts for a long time.

**Muscle spasms** are very different from muscle spasticity. A muscle spasm can happen when your muscles become very stressed due to a headache, back or neck pain, or due to a condition called fibromyalgia.

Anyone can have a muscle spasm. Muscle spasms do not last very long, but they can come back anytime and be very painful.



## How are muscle spasms and spasticity treated?

If you have muscle spasms, consider doing the following before you take medicine:



Doing exercise or yoga to stretch the muscles



Getting massages



Going to a chiropractor



Getting acupuncture

If these methods do not help you find relief, then you may want to try **analgesics**.

Analgesics are medicines you can get without a prescription that help relieve pain and inflammation. These include generic medicines like *acetaminophen* (brand-name *Tylenol*), *ibuprofen* (brand-name *Advil*), and *naproxen* (brand-name *Aleve*).



In the United States, “generic” medicines are just as good as brand-name medicines. They are very safe and work just like the brand-name medicine, and they cost a lot less money. Ask your doctor if you can get a generic medicine instead of a brand-name medicine.

If these medicines do not work, or you cannot take them because you have kidney, liver or heart problems, then your doctor may want to try a **muscle relaxant**.

If you have muscle spasticity, doctors will prescribe muscle relaxants as your first treatment option.



## Do muscle relaxants have side effects?

The most common side effects of muscle relaxants are:

- Feeling sleepy
- Feeling weak or fatigued
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Having dry mouth



The first time you take a muscle relaxant, you should not drive, use heavy machinery, or go to work until you see how sleepy you get.



You should also avoid alcohol while taking muscle relaxants. Taking these medicines and drinking alcohol can increase the risk of damage to your liver.



## Which muscle relaxant should I choose?

*Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* evaluated different types of muscle relaxants by comparing how well they work, how safe they are, their side effects, and their cost. *Consumer Reports* recommends these generic muscle relaxants as the best for most people:

For muscle spasms:

- **Cyclobenzaprine**

If *cyclobenzaprine* does not work well for you or you get side effects that you cannot deal with, then you should switch to another muscle relaxant. In this case, *Consumer Reports* recommends *methocarbamol* or *chlorzoxazone*.

For muscle spasticity:

- **Baclofen**

If *baclofen* does not work well for you, then *Consumer Reports* recommends *tizanidine*.

*Cyclobenzaprine* and *baclofen* are both prescription medicines. *Cyclobenzaprine* costs \$8 to \$15 for a week supply if you don't use insurance. *Baclofen* costs \$27 to \$60 for a month supply.

To learn more about this topic go to:

<http://www.consumerreports.org/health/best-buy-drugs/muscle-relaxants.htm>



### How to Get the Best Price for Your Medicines

- **Ask for a generic:** Tell your pharmacist you want a generic medicine instead of the brand-name. You will pay less for a generic. Not all brand-name medicines have a generic, but many do.
- **Compare prices:** Call or visit three different pharmacies. Give them the name of the medicine and ask how much it costs. Ask if they have a drug discount program that can help you pay less for your medicine. Buy your medicine from the pharmacy that gives you the cheapest price.
- **Sign up for patient assistance programs:** Most companies that make medicines have programs that help people that don't have a lot of money and do not have insurance to get brand-name medicines for free or at a low cost. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance can help you find a program: [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org) or 1-888-477-2669.

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