

## **Tamiflu users say side effects are common**

### ***One-third of patients report nausea; some children experience mental conditions***

Nausea, headaches and vomiting are the most common side effects of the popular flu drug Tamiflu—and they occur more severely in young children than adults, consumers tell Askapatient.com.

Tamiflu (oseltamivir phosphate) is approved for children over 1, but Askapatient.com participants gave Tamiflu an average rating of 2.1 (not satisfied) for patients under 6, compared to 2.5 (less than somewhat satisfied) for patients over 12. The ratings coincide with the results of a recent study by [UK's Health Protection Agency](#),<sup>i</sup> in which more than half of children in three London schools who took Tamiflu suffered side effects. In that study, forty percent had gastrointestinal problems, while nearly one in five experienced mild neuropsychiatric effects such as confusion, strange behavior and sleep problems.

#### **TAMIFLU SIDE EFFECTS IN CHILDREN (65 respondents)**

(reported on Askapatient.com; age 12 and under; as of October 22, 2009)

<b>Side Effect</b>	<b>Number of Patients</b>	<b>Percent of Patients</b>
Gastrointestinal Problems (Nausea, Vomiting, and/or Diarrhea)	24	37%
Neuropsychiatric Side Effect* (Night Terrors, Hallucinations, Confusion)	16	25%
Skin Reaction/Rash, Itching, Swelling	8	12%

\*In 2008, the FDA issued a [FDA safety alert](#) regarding pediatric patients, neuropsychiatric events, and use of Tamiflu and Relenza.

While the [Tamiflu drug label](#) says only 10% of adult flu patients and 15% of children aged 1-12 experienced nausea during clinical trials, more than one-third of Askapatient.com respondents reported suffering from nausea. Many users tell Askapatient.com the side effects led them to discontinue treatment.

**TAMIFLU SIDE EFFECTS (440 respondents)**  
(reported on Askapatient.com; all ages; as of October 22, 2009)

Side Effect	Number of Patients	Percent of Patients
Nausea	166	38%
Vomiting	80	18%
Headache	72	16%
Dizziness	60	14%
Insomnia	60	14%
Diarrhea	56	13%
Rash, Blisters, Itching, Swelling	51	12%
Night Terrors/Nightmares	51	12%
Anxiety/Panic Attacks	33	8%
Neuropsychiatric Events* (Hallucinations and Psychotic Episode)	29	7%
Depression	29	7%

Not all respondents told Askapatient.com, an independent forum for consumers, they were disappointed with Tamiflu. Out of 440 patients, 119 gave it 4 or 5—the two highest marks. Of these patients, most reported having mild side effects or no side effects at all.

As the pandemic flu virus that began last spring continues to spread, patients afflicted with suspected or confirmed Influenza A (H1N1 or Swine Flu) are turning to Tamiflu in record numbers to reduce the severity and duration of the illness, while others are taking the drug as a preventive measure. This is despite the fact that last month the [CDC revised their guidelines](#) about who should be taking flu antivirals: only high-risk flu patients or flu patients being admitted to the hospital.

A recent study in the [British Medical Journal](#)<sup>ii</sup> found that Tamiflu provides a small benefit for children and shortens the duration of influenza by about a day. Such studies, along with the growing numbers of reports on side effects and benefits, can help doctors and flu patients decide on the best individual course of treatment.

To examine the Tamiflu ratings in detail, please see [Askapatient's Tamiflu Drug Ratings Report](#).

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<sup>i</sup> Eurosurveillance, Volume 14, Issue 30, 30 July 2009

**Rapid communications**

[Oseltamivir adherence and side effects among children in three London schools affected by influenza A\(H1N1\)v, May 2009 – an internet-based cross-sectional survey](#)

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<sup>ii</sup> British Journal of Medicine 10 August 2009, doi:10.1136/bmj.b3172

[Neuraminidase inhibitors for treatment and prophylaxis of influenza in children: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials](#)

by Matthew Shun-Shin, , Matthew Thompson, Carl Heneghan, , Rafael Perera, , Anthony Harnden, , David Mant, Oxford University

*Askapatient.com has been providing comparative drug and healthcare information for consumers since 2000. Operated by Consumer Health Resource Group, LLC, Askapatient.com provides patients with a unique forum in which to share and compare medication experiences.*