

A few Lariam success stories



Here are a few success stories sent to us by people who have recovered from Lariam toxicity.

If you have been reading the daily posts [group Lariam@yahoo.com] and become fearful that you will inevitably suffer long-term and crippling side effects from Lariam, please note that the group is somewhat self-selecting, because it's those with ongoing problems or fresh problems seeking answers who tend to post more. Many folks who have gotten better move on. I stick around in the hopes that I can sometimes offer some help, and because one day I hope we find the right timing and opportunity to finally get this drug off the market.

I had a severe adverse reaction to Lariam (vestibular disorder, seizures, panic attacks, psychosis, suicidal ideation, violent urges, depression, mania--the whole enchilada, basically). I was at my worst in the first few months after Lariam, then developed the seizures after six months, and then gradually got better over the course of two years. It's interesting that you say sucking on mints helps ward off your panic attacks. A cognitive behavioral therapist told me to do small physical things (scratch my palms, hum a song) to distract myself when I felt my seizures coming on, which were panic-related. It WORKS like a charm, as you have found. Well done.

On the hope front, doctors at the California Ear Institute who diagnosed my vestibular disorder told me they had seen another Lariam victim like me, and it had taken him 1.5-2 years to get better (i.e. for the brain to compensate for the brain damage, in our cases). Sure enough, about two years later my dizziness had become 95% better, my seizures were gone and I now feel fully functional. I have since won national awards (I'm a journalist), had a healthy baby (my finest production!), and thanked my lucky stars every day for the past year or so that I did finally pass through the most hellish two years of my life.

Yes, there are days where I become a bit more anxious or down than perhaps I would have before, and my balance is not the best. So I quit tango dancing (!) and I cut myself some extra slack for stressful experiences. But this is the headline: I feel 98% better, and count myself as fully recovered (hey, everybody in my life has some sort of mental or physical problem they are dealing with sans Lariam, such as anxiety, depression, back pain.).

The fact that we have made it through what we have is incredible. For me, life is all the

sweeter for it. Go ahead and keep putting one foot in front of the other, go easy on yourself on your off-days, and focus on all that you can still do. I'll bet it is considerable.
From S.

hi,

i wanted to respond to your posting as well, because i know exactly how you feel. i too am only 25 and some days i feel like i'm 85 because my entire schedule seems to revolve around endless doctor's appointments. some days i just feel like i'm plain crazy, and that all of this is in my mind. but it's important to remember - YOU ARE NOT ALONE, and what you are going through is REAL.

for me, lots of sleep has really seemed to help. one of my strongest reactions to lariam was the incredibly vivid, and often frightening, dreams. but those dreams have actually helped my body and mind to work through a lot, and over time the dreams have gotten less scary and more healing. i also recommend just laying low a lot.

after over three years of suffering from lariam, i finally feel able to hold down a full-time job, but that's about all i can do. i just don't commit to anything else above and beyond it. if i over-commit myself (as i was often prone to do before), i get stressed out, tired, and have another "episode".

i think that all of us on here would agree that the recovery process is cyclical. yes, it's true that you may have relapses of symptoms, but i have found that each time it's shorter and less severe. also, you already have the mental strength to get through it because you've already been through the worst of it. just remember, if you have a bad day or cluster of days, keep reminding yourself that it won't be like that forever. that's what i always have to do.

so, you just cope with the symptoms in whatever way you find best (for me, it's just sleeping a lot and laying around watching TV), and you'll get through it. don't lose your hope. we're all in this together and are here to support one another.
take care, e

Hi F,

I am one of the cases someone else wrote about – feeling better and so not as active on the chat group. But, I do try to help when I feel I have something to offer.

In this case, I would say I was “cured” of my Lariam toxicity through the use of acupuncture and Chinese herbs. Acupuncturists are familiar with toxicity issues and they will treat you accordingly. Basically, just explain what happened to you, and the resulting symptoms. They will work the various points to clear your liver of stagnation, and can also treat you for the symptoms, such as anxiety. The Chinese herbs should only be administered by an acupuncturist who is also licensed to dispense the herbs. The best kind is the loose herbs that can be custom mixed to fit your needs. They are usually taken by making a tea out of them that truly does not taste all that bad.

I think everyone needs to find the treatment that will help them best. I had tried about a year of therapy to work on my anxiety issues because I did NOT want to take more drugs. Although my therapist gave me some good advice and practices to deal with my anxiety, I did not see a marked improvement in my own condition until I underwent a complete detox regiment with an acupuncturist.

Good luck and let us know how you are doing.

N

I took Lariam in July of 2005 for 4 weeks. In the beginning I felt paranoid, fearful, had anxiety attacks, palpitations that shook my body and I could not sleep-ever!!! It has taken 8 months but I feel that I am 99% back. I have been sleeping on my own, without drugs for over 4 weeks and palpitations occur once in a while but not with any great intensity. I have totally lost the anxiety and fearfulness. I have also gained back the weight I lost.

I am feeling so good I am afraid the cycle may change. I will not let lariam control me and I will get through whatever it has to offer. I feel like a changed person as a result of my health issues. I do feel stronger and more confident. It was hell but I now know how wonderful life truly is.

Anon.

I took my first Lariam pill shortly after arriving in Ecuador in January 2001. We were spending our first week high up in the Andes, chilling out, walking, etc., and expected to be down on the coast within the next couple of weeks – hence the Lariam.

The physical effects were immediate, especially diarrhoea and the lurid dreams. Vertigo became unbearable – not a good thing in the Andes where some of the paths have vertical drops alongside them. I was also trying to give up smoking. I put the bad feelings down to nicotine withdrawal and altitude and struggled on. A week later I took the second pill, we were on our way to the coast. The weather on the coast was poor so after a few days we gave up

and headed back to Quito and then northwards towards an area of hot springs. I took the third pill.

On the day my fourth pill was due I re-read the list of possible side effects, ticked off [that I had] nearly all of them and stopped taking Lariam. That's when I found out that stopping the pill doesn't make the effects go away. On my return to the UK I reported my condition, anxiety and panic attacks, depression, insomnia, etc., etc., to my doctor who said that I would be well in 6 months.

Wrong.

For the next 2 years I struggled, more or less on my own medically, but with the support of my partner and friends. Then Sodium Valproate and the name of a doctor in Bristol were mentioned on this web site. I persuaded my GP to refer me to Bristol and my recovery started. It took until Christmas 2005, nearly 5 years after taking only three Lariam pills, with the use of Sodium Valproate and the steady guidance of the Bristol doctor, for me to return to near normality. I now only occasionally have anxiety attacks, brought on by stress, which I can deal with. However, my understanding of mental illness has vastly improved and I have immense sympathy with those undergoing the same or similar problems, whether lariam induced or not.

For others, and me, recovery is possible. You have to believe that it is possible for you. We all have our own ways of dealing with the pain, frustration, desperation, etc. and you may find inspiration within this site. I desperately tried to go on living my life as if nothing was wrong and made very few changes to my lifestyle. I substituted tea for coffee as people say caffeine is bad for Lariam sufferers. I substituted wine for beer, as beer seemed to affect me badly. I continued smoking, as the pain of nicotine withdrawal was too much alongside Lariam (I have since succeeded in kicking nicotine). Other sufferers have made enormous changes to their lifestyles and benefited greatly. We are all different.

Keep fighting. Use this site, your loved ones and your friends for help and support. You will survive.

Good luck, T (in UK)

Hello everyone,

My name is N_____ and I consider myself fully recovered from my reaction to lariam. I took lariam as a Peace Corps volunteer from July to October of 2005. I experienced headaches, hallucinations, disorientation, and recurrent suicidal ideation. I was hospitalized in Washington DC for a week in late October, and returned home in early

November. I experienced severe headaches, photophobia, and extreme mood changes until the end of December, and during those first two months home I saw several specialists in hope of determining what was wrong with me - MRI, spinal tap, blood patch, and dozens of blood tests. Then, right around the new year, I suddenly felt better. The recovery was almost bizarre in its suddenness.

Based on my experiences, I have decided to apply to medical school. I am currently taking pre-med classes at a local university and with some luck and hard work will be ready for the MCAT by August. My experience fundamentally changed me and I decided while still in the middle of my worst symptoms to become a doctor in order to understand what I experienced but more so to help other people affected. You could say that I made lemonade out of lemons. Actually it would be more accurate to say that I made lemonade out of a bucket of shit.

I understand that I am lucky in that my symptoms, as severe as they were, went away in a relatively short time. So people never get back to 100%. I am also lucky that I had a lot of support from friends and family.

Even if you don't get back to 100%, you have to find a way to benefit from your experience. This is part of your life journey, like it or not. I know that might offend some of you, but when I was at my worst, in order to keep from literally going insane I had to find a strength that I never knew existed. Meditation helped immensely, as did Yoga. So did writing in a journal, even if some of the entries consisted entirely of explicatives. Even before I started to improve, I found that in some ways I was a stronger and more positive person, and now the benefits of my four months of hell are truly amazing.

Maybe you'll never be back to who you were. That is horrible, I understand that. But the story doesn't have to end there. As Sartre put it, "Life begins on the other side of despair." To varying degrees based on your particular reaction to the drug, it is your choice what happens next. In that realization, there is all the power you will ever need.

Best, N

Hi All,

My name is Tom, and I created [the Lariam group on Yahoo] many many moons ago when I had an experience with Lariam.

I just want you to know, that I have COMPLETELY recovered from this disastrous event.

I don't check the list very much, but I'm always looking for comments and suggestions. Also, we are always looking for

volunteer moderators to ensure that people that join the list are actually lariam victims!

I Hope everyone out there is beating Lariam.....and letting everyone know what a disastrous poison this so called "drug" really is!

Tom

