

Mucolytics and Expectorants

Information about Expectorants and Mucolytics, including directions for use, side effects and precautions to take.

What are Expectorants and Mucolytics for?

Mucolytics and Expectorants are a group of medications that works by thinning and loosening mucus in the airways, helping to clear chest congestion thus making breathing easier. Common examples of Expectorants include guaifenesin and ammonium chloride combined with diphenhydramine. Common examples of Mucolytics are acetylcysteine, bromhexine, ambroxol, and carbocisteine.

How should I take/use Expectorants and Mucolytics?

- Take the medications as prescribed by your healthcare professional. Consult your healthcare professional if you are not sure how to take the medication correctly.
- Some of this medication should be taken after food e.g. Ambroxol. Others such as acetylcysteine and bromhexine may be taken with or without food.
- For Mucolytic syrups and Expectorant syrups, shake the bottle well before use.
- For effervescent tablets and sachets, dissolve one tablet or the recommended number of sachets in at least half a cup of water.
- If your symptoms persist or worsen after one week of taking the Expectorants or Mucolytics, talk to your healthcare professional.

What should I do if I forget to take/use Expectorants and Mucolytics as prescribed?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue normally. Do not take two doses to make up for the missed dose.

What precautions should I take before taking Expectorants and Mucolytics?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication.

- You are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies.
- You have existing conditions such as gastric ulcers, liver or kidney problems and lung conditions e.g. Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (COPD) or severe uncontrolled asthma.
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding.

What are some common Expectorant and Mucolytics side effects?

- Some Expectorants may cause drowsiness or dizziness.
 - Avoid driving, operating machinery or other activities which require concentration if affected.
- Common side effects may include nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.
 - These effects are usually mild and will pass quickly.

What are some rare but serious Expectorant side effects and Mucolytics side effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

Signs that your condition may require further medical attention include:

- Cough with thick yellow or green phlegm or mucus, or blood
- Fever more than 38.6°C
- Unintended weight loss
- Drenching night sweats
- Cough lasting for longer than 3-4 weeks
- Development of new symptoms during self-treatment

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop taking Expectorants and Mucolytics and see your healthcare professional immediately.

What food or medication should I avoid when taking Expectorants and Mucolytics?

Do let your healthcare professional know if you are taking or if you are planning to take other medications, nutritional supplements, or herbal products.

How should I store Expectorants and Mucolytics?

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

For Expectorant syrups and Mucolytics syrups, discard the bottle 6 months after opening or if expired, whichever is sooner.

How should I dispose Expectorants and Mucolytics safely?

Pack Expectorants and Mucolytics into a black trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing into the rubbish chute or bin.

Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose of Expectorants or Mucolytics, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.

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