

Acitretin

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

It is mainly used to treat severe psoriasis, an inflammatory condition of the skin with increased turnover of skin cells, creating red, scaly patches of skin. The medication works by regulating the normal growth and development of skin cells.

This medication may also be used for other conditions as determined by your doctor.

How should I take this medication?

This medication should be taken with or after food for better absorption. Swallow the capsule whole, do not crush or chew it.

What should I do if I forget to take this medication?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose. Then take your next dose at the usual time. Do not take two doses to make up for the missed dose.

What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding:
 - This medication can cause serious harm to an unborn child. You are advised to practice strict birth control for at least 1 month before starting on the medication, when taking the medication and at least 3 years after stopping the medication.
 - This medication may pass into breast milk and harm your baby. Do not breastfeed for at least 3 years after stopping the medication
- You have diabetes, high cholesterol or triglycerides (fat in the blood), liver or kidney disease
- You are planning to donate blood. Do not donate blood for at least 3 years after stopping the medication. This is to prevent passing donated blood to a pregnant woman and causing harm to the baby.
- You are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies

What are some common side-effects of this medication?

- Red, cracked and sore lips
 - Apply lip balm frequently
- Irritated and dry eyes
 - Apply lubricating eye-drops or artificial tears to prevent this. Stop the use of contact lenses if irritation persists.
- Dry skin, sometimes with peeling
 - Apply moisturiser regularly to manage skin dryness
- Dry mouth
 - Chew sugar-free gum, suck on sugar-free hard candies or ice chips, sip water regularly
- Dry nose. Nose bleeding may occur for severe cases
 - Apply white soft paraffin to the lining inside of your nose
- Muscle and joint pain or stiffness
 - Avoid intense physical exercise to prevent it from getting worse
- Increased risk of sunburn
 - Avoid staying directly under sunlight for long period of time. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen product with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30 and wear protective clothing when you are exposed to direct sunlight.

What are some rare but serious 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

Some of these side effects include:

- Liver problem: Signs include dark urine or light coloured stools, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, stomach pain, yellowing of your eyes or skin
- Low mood (depression)
- Blurred vision or change in vision
- Severe headache
- Nausea
- Severe backache
- Hair loss

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

What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?

- You should avoid taking alcohol when taking this medication and for 2 months after stopping it. Alcohol causes the medication to stay longer in the body and increases the risk of side-effects.
- Do not take vitamin A supplements or multivitamins that contains vitamin A.
- Do not take this medication if you are currently taking any Tetracycline class of antibiotics (such as Doxycycline, Minocycline, and Tetracycline). This can increase the risk of high pressure in the head leading to headaches, nausea and vomiting.

How should I store this medication?

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

How should I throw away this medication safely?

Pack this medication 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, 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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