

Finasteride (for Hair Loss)

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

Finasteride is approved to treat male pattern hair loss (androgenetic alopecia).

In the scalp, finasteride lowers the levels of a male hormone (dihydrotestosterone), which is a major cause of male pattern hair loss. In this way, finasteride helps to slow the balding process, preventing further hair loss, and leading to increased hair growth in some patients.

The improvement rate varies from person to person; it usually occurs after the medication has been used for at least 3 months and lasts only as long as the medication continues to be used. Hair loss will begin again within 3 to 6 months after stopping the medication.

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

How should I take/use this medication?

- This medication may be taken with or without food.
- If you experience stomach upset, take the medication with food.
- Do not take more than once a day.
- This medication should not be touched or handled by pregnant women or women who are of childbearing age as the active ingredient of the medication (finasteride) can be absorbed through the skin. If contact with the tablet occurs, wash the area immediately with soap and water thoroughly as the medication may harm the development of the fetus.

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

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. 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?

- Use a condom during sexual intercourse to avoid exposing your partner to the medication. This is because the medication can be found in semen. This is to protect your partner if your partner is or may be pregnant, as the medication may affect the normal development of the baby's sex organs.
- Avoid donating blood during treatment or for 1 month after you stopped the treatment as there may be a risk that your blood may be given to a pregnant female transfusion recipient.

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients in this medication.
- You have heart, liver, prostate or urological diseases.
- You are going for prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. Finasteride may decrease the level of PSA, which is a prostate-specific tumour marker, in the blood.
- You have abnormally low mood or have depression.

What are some common side-effects of this medication?

- Unable to get or sustain an erection
- Decreased libido (sex drive); less desire to have sex
- Difficulty with ejaculation

These side effects may be temporary and reversible. If they are persistent and become bothersome, please discuss it with your doctor.

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

- 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
- Abnormal breast enlargement, development of lumps in the breast area, breast pain or nipple discharge
- Pain in the testicles
- Abnormal reduction in urine volume
- Persistent inability to have sex especially in men with a history of depression and anxiety (post-finasteride syndrome)

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

Finasteride use in males planning to have children:

- Finasteride may reduce the amount of sperm and the ability of sperms to move.
- For a man and his partner who have difficulty in having children, please consult your doctor for further assessments.

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

Inform your healthcare professional if you are taking or intend to take any other medications, supplements, traditional medications, or herbal remedies.

How should I store this medication?

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children, pregnant women and women who are of childbearing age.

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. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.

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