

Tetracycline (Oral)

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

Tetracyclines is a class of antibiotics that is used to treat or prevent infections caused by certain bacteria.

They are also used for the treatment of acne by suppressing the growth of the acne bacteria and decreasing the inflammation caused by the bacteria.

Examples of tetracyclines include:

- Doxycycline
- Minocycline
- Tetracycline

How should I take/use this medication?

- Doxycycline or Minocycline: Take with or after food.
- Tetracycline: Take 1 hour before or 2 hours after food for better absorption. However, if it upsets your stomach, you can take it with some food.
- Take these medications with a glass of water to prevent irritation of the oesophagus (gullet).
- Avoid lying down for at least 30 minutes after ingestion.
- Complete the course of antibiotics even if you feel better as incomplete treatment might cause the infection to return or cause antibiotic resistance. When antibiotic resistance happens, the antibiotic will not be able to control the growth of the bacteria anymore. Do not stop taking your medication without checking with your healthcare professional.

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?

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.
- The person taking this medication is less than 8-12 years old, as this medication can cause tooth discoloration and also slow down bone growth.
- You are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies.
- The symptoms persist after completion of the course of this medication.

In the treatment of acne, these medications may be given for about 2 to 6 months.

What are some common side-effects of this medication?

Some common side effects include:

- Nausea, vomiting, stomachache or “wind” in the stomach
 - Taking the medication with some food may reduce these symptoms.
- Diarrhoea
- Vaginal itch or discharge, sore mouth or tongue
 - This may indicate a yeast infection which may need treatment.
- Increased sensitivity of skin to sunlight resulting in a skin rash, itching, redness, discoloration or severe sunburn
 - Avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight. Use a sunscreen and wear protective clothing when exposure to the sun is unavoidable.
- Minocycline may also cause dizziness or light-headedness
 - If affected, do not drive or operate machinery.

If any of the side effects do not go away or are serious, please see your doctor.

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
 - Round or oval red patches in the mouth, groin or body which may ulcerate
- Dark urine or light coloured stools, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, stomach pain, yellowing of your eyes or skin.
- Minocycline may rarely cause blue-black pigmentation in the skin at the site of acne scars or elsewhere on the body.
- Minocycline may also very rarely result in drug-induced lupus. Symptoms include rash on the cheeks or other parts of the body, getting sunburn easily, muscle or joint pain, chest pain or shortness of breath, or swelling in the arms or legs.

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?

Inform your healthcare professional if you are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies.

- Concurrent administration of tetracycline with other medications may increase the blood level of the other medications such as Methotrexate and Warfarin.
- Tetracyclines should NOT be taken concurrently with Acitretin or Isotretinoin, due to an increased risk of high pressure in the head leading to headaches, nausea and vomiting.
- Avoid taking antacids or products containing calcium or iron together with these medications. They may reduce the effectiveness of these medications. You can take these 2 hours before or after your medication.

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. 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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