PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Norfloxacin

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: Canada

ALTI-Norfloxacin; APO-Norfloxacin

Warning

- This drug may cause severe side effects like irritated or torn tendons; nerve problems in the arms, hands, legs, or feet; and nervous system problems. These can happen alone or at the same time. They can happen within hours to weeks after starting this drug. Some of these effects may not go away, and may lead to disability or death.
- The chance of irritated or torn tendons is greater in people over the age of 60; heart, kidney, or lung transplant patients; or people taking steroid drugs. Tendon problems can happen as long as several months after treatment. Call your doctor right away if you have pain, bruising, or swelling in the back of the ankle, shoulder, hand, or other joints. Call your doctor right away if you are not able to move or bear weight on a joint or if you hear or feel a snap or pop.
- Do not take if you have myasthenia gravis. Very bad and sometimes deadly breathing problems have happened with this drug in people who have myasthenia gravis.
- A type of abnormal heartbeat (prolonged QT interval) has happened with drugs like this one. Rarely, this has led to another type of unsafe abnormal heartbeat (torsades de pointes). Talk with your doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat bacterial infections.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

For all patients taking this drug:

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have any of these health problems: Long QT on ECG, low magnesium

levels, or low potassium levels.

- If you have a slow heartbeat.
- If you have ever had any of these health problems: Nervous system problems or tendon problems.
- If you have had tendons get irritated or torn when taking this drug or an alike drug in the past.
- If you are not able to pass urine.
- If your bones are still growing.
- If you have an aortic aneurysm (ballooning or bulging of the aorta, the main blood vessel that comes out of the heart) or you are at risk for this health problem. This includes if you have other blood vessel problems, high blood pressure, or certain health problems like Marfan syndrome or Ehlers-Danlos syndrome.
- If you are taking probenecid.
- If you are taking any drugs that can cause a certain type of heartbeat that is not normal (prolonged QT interval). There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

Children:

- If the patient is a child. This drug is not approved for use in children.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- High and low blood sugar has happened with drugs like this one. Most of the time, low blood sugar happened in people with diabetes who were taking drugs that lower blood sugar like insulin. Very low blood sugar has led to coma and sometimes death. Check blood sugar as you have been told by the doctor.
- Do not use longer than you have been told. A second infection may happen.
- Tell your doctor if you take a drug that has caffeine, or you eat or drink products that have caffeine, like tea, coffee, cola, or chocolate.
- You may get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- Be careful if you have low levels of an enzyme called G6PD. Anemia may happen. Low levels of G6PD may be more likely in patients of African, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean descent.
- If you are over the age of 60, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of high or low blood sugar like breath that smells like fruit, dizziness, fast breathing, fast heartbeat, feeling confused, feeling sleepy, feeling weak, flushing, headache, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, shaking, or sweating.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of a very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Change in eyesight.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Shortness of breath.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.

- Fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or feeling very tired or weak.
- Purple spots or redness of the skin.
- Ringing in ears.
- Shakiness.
- Muscle pain or weakness.
- Not able to focus.
- Memory problems or loss.
- Vaginal itching or discharge.
- Diarrhea is common with antibiotics. Sometimes, diarrhea may be caused by a certain bowel infection (C diff). C diff may happen during treatment or within a few months after the last dose. This infection can be severe or even deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have stomach cramps, fever, long-lasting diarrhea, very loose or watery stools, or bloody stools. Check with your doctor before treating diarrhea.
- A rare but severe problem with the main blood vessel that comes out of the heart (aorta) has happened within 2 months after taking drugs like this one, especially in older patients. This includes tears or bursting of the aorta. This can lead to severe bleeding and even death. The cause for this effect is not known. Call your doctor right away if you have sudden pain in the stomach, chest, or back that is severe and does not go away.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of nerve problems. These may include not being able to handle heat or cold; change in sense of touch; or burning, numbness, tingling, pain, or weakness in the arms, hands, legs, or feet.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of nervous system problems. These may include anxiety, bad dreams, trouble sleeping, change in eyesight, dizziness, feeling confused, feeling nervous or agitated, feeling restless, hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there), new or worse behavior or mood changes like depression or thoughts of suicide, seizures, or very bad headaches.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Dizziness or headache.
- Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- Take on an empty stomach. Take 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals or having milk or other dairy products.
- Take with a full glass of water.
- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids every day unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.
- Do not take dairy products, antacids, didanosine, multivitamins, minerals (calcium, iron, zinc, magnesium), or sucralfate within 2 hours of this drug.
- Use as you have been told, even if your signs get better.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2025-08-19

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Norfloxacin - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center