PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Alprostadil

This information from Lexicomp® 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: US

Caverject; Caverject Impulse; Edex; Muse; Prostin VR

Brand Names: Canada

Caverject; Muse; Prostin VR

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat erectile dysfunction (ED).
- Some products may be used to help test for ED.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take 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 been told that you are not healthy enough

to have sex.

- If you have a deformed penis, penile implant, or other penile problems.
- If you have any of these health problems: Polycythemia or thrombocythemia.
- If you have any of these health problems: Leukemia, multiple myeloma, sickle cell anemia, or other health problems that may raise the chance of painful erection (hard penis) or an erection that lasts for longer than 4 hours. Ask your doctor if you are not sure.
- If you are female. This drug is not approved for use in females.

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?

All products:

- 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 until you see how this drug affects you.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- This drug does not stop the spread of diseases like HIV or hepatitis that are passed through having sex. Do not have any kind of sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

Urethral suppository:

- If your sex partner is able to get pregnant, use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy.
- If your sex partner is pregnant, use a condom during sex.

- This drug is not approved for use in children. Talk with the doctor.

Injection:

- There is a chance of the needle breaking when using the injection. Needles have broken with part of the needle still in the penis. If the needle breaks and you can grab the broken end, take it out and call your doctor. If you cannot grab the broken end, call your doctor right away.
- This drug has benzyl alcohol in it. Serious side effects can happen in newborns or infants with some doses of benzyl alcohol, including if given with other drugs that have benzyl alcohol. This drug is not approved for use in children. Talk with the doctor.

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.

- Redness, lumps, swelling, tenderness, or curving of the erection (hard penis).
- Irritation where this drug is given.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Very bad headache.
- Shortness of breath.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Swelling of the leg veins.
- Call your doctor right away if you have a painful erection (hard penis) or an erection that lasts for longer than 4 hours. This may happen even when you are not having sex. If this is not treated right away, it may lead to lasting sex problems and you may not be able to have sex.

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:

Urethral suppository:

- Penile pain.
- Warm or burning feeling in the urethra.
- Aching in the penis, testicles, legs, or in the area between the penis and rectum.

Injection:

- Penile pain.

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.

Urethral suppository:

- This drug is for use in the urethra (the tube that urine passes through).
- Your doctor will teach you how to take this drug.
- Be sure you know how to use this drug. Read the instructions for use that come with this drug. If there are no instructions for use or you have any questions about how to use this drug, talk with the doctor or pharmacist.
- This drug works best if you pass urine before using.
- Wash your hands before and after use.

Injection:

- Inject into the side of the penis as you have been told by your doctor or read the package insert.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Do not shake.
- Attach new needle before each dose.
- Do not use a bent needle. Do not try to straighten a bent needle. It may be more likely to break.
- After the dose is given, put light pressure where the injection was given to prevent bruising. Do this for 5 minutes and until bleeding stops.

- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- Each prefilled syringe or vial is for one use only. Throw away any part left over after the dose is given.
- Throw away needles in a needle/sharp disposal box. Do not reuse needles or other items. When the box is full, follow all local rules for getting rid of it. Talk with a doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Switch sides of the penis and where this drug is given with each dose of this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- This drug is used on an as needed basis. Do not use more often than told by the doctor.

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

- Store unopened foil pouch in the refrigerator.
- Protect from heat and sunlight.
- This drug may be stored at room temperature for up to 2 weeks before use.

Injection:

- Some brands of this drug need to be stored in a refrigerator. Some brands of this drug need to be stored at room temperature. If you have questions about how to store this drug, talk with your pharmacist.
- Some products may need to be given right away after mixing. Other products may be stored for some time after mixing. Be sure you know how long the product is good for and how to store it after mixing. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

All products:

- 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

2024-03-14

Copyright

© 2024 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

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

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