PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Albuterol

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

ProAir Digihaler; ProAir HFA [DSC]; ProAir RespiClick; Proventil HFA; Ventolin HFA

Brand Names: Canada

Airomir; APO-Salbutamol HFA; DOM-Salbutamol; PMS-Salbutamol; TEVA-Salbutamol; TEVA-Salbutamol HFA; Ventolin; Ventolin Diskus; Ventolin HFA; Ventolin PF [DSC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to open the airways in lung diseases where spasm may cause breathing problems.
- It is used to prevent breathing problems that happen with exercise.

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

All products:

- 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 are using another drug like this one. If you are not sure, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

All dry powder inhaler products:

- If you have a milk allergy.

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.

- Do not take more of this drug or use it more often than you have been told. Deaths have happened when too much of this drug was taken. Talk with your doctor.
- Call your doctor right away if your normal dose does not work well, if your signs get worse, or if you need to use this drug more often than normal.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely.
- 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:

All products:

- 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 blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Chest pain or pressure, a fast heartbeat, or an abnormal heartbeat.
- This drug may sometimes cause severe breathing problems. This may be life-threatening. When this happens with an inhaler or with liquid for breathing in, most of the time it happens right after a dose and after the first use of a new canister or vial of this drug. If you have trouble breathing, breathing that is worse, wheezing, or coughing, get medical help right away.

All dry powder inhaler products:

- Pain when passing urine.
- Trouble passing urine.

All oral products:

- Signs of a severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome, erythema multiforme) like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); skin reaction that looks like rings; red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

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:

All products:

- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Dizziness or headache.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Shakiness.

All products for breathing in:

- Throat irritation.
- Runny nose.

All dry powder inhaler products:

- Back pain.
- Aches and pains. Mild pain drugs may help.

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.

All inhaler products:

- For breathing into the lungs.
- If you are using more than 1 inhaled drug, ask the

doctor which drug to use first.

- If using this drug to prevent breathing problems that happen with exercise, use 15 to 30 minutes before exercise.
- Follow how to clean carefully.
- Put the cap back on after you are done using your dose.

Inhaler (aerosol):

- Shake well before use.
- You will need to prime the inhaler before first use. You will also need to prime the inhaler if it has not been used for some time. Be sure you know when you need to prime the inhaler and how to do it. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.
- Some inhalers need to be primed if dropped. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.
- A spacer may be used with the inhaler for easy use.
- This inhaler may have a dose counter to keep track of how many doses are left. If it does, throw the inhaler away when the dose counter reaches “0”.

All dry powder inhaler products:

- Close the device after each dose. Do not open the device unless a dose is being used.
- Do not take the device apart or wash it. Do not use it with a spacer. Do not breathe out into the device.
- Clean mouthpiece by wiping with a dry tissue or cloth. Do not wash or put in water.
- This inhaler has a dose counter to keep track of how many doses are left. Throw away the inhaler when the dose counter reaches “0,” 13 months after opening the foil pouch, or after the expiration date, whichever comes first.

Digital dry powder inhaler:

- This product keeps track of inhaler event information and may be used with a smartphone app. This product can be used without being connected to the smartphone app. Be sure you know how to use this product and the smartphone app. Follow what the doctor has told you to do. Read the package insert for details. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

Liquid for breathing in:

- For breathing in only as a liquid (solution) by a special machine (nebulizer) into the lungs.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- Do not mix other drugs in nebulizer.

All oral products:

- Take with or without food.

Oral liquid:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If you use this drug on a regular basis, use a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not use 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times 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?

All products:

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- 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.

All inhaler products:

- Protect from cold.
- If the inhaler comes in a foil pouch, store in the foil pouch until ready for use.

Inhaler (aerosol):

- Protect from heat and sunlight. Do not puncture or burn even if it seems empty.
- Throw away the inhaler after the most number of sprays have been used, even if it feels like there is more drug in the canister.
- Store with the mouthpiece down.

All dry powder inhaler products:

- Protect from heat.

Liquid for breathing in:

- Store unused containers in foil pouch until use.
- Check how long vials may be stored once the pouch has been opened.

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

2024-02-15

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.

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