PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Ethambutol

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

Myambutol

## Brand Names: Canada

Etibi

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat TB (tuberculosis).
- This drug is taken with other drugs. Be sure you know about the warnings, benefits, and risks of these other drugs. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about any of the drugs.

## 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 an eye problem called optic neuritis.
- If you cannot tell if you have changes in eyesight or you are not able to tell your doctor if you have changes in eyesight.

### Children:

- If your child is younger than 13 years of age. Do not give this drug to a child younger than 13 years of age.

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.
- Have your blood work checked and eye exams as you have been told by your doctor.
- If you have gout, talk with your doctor.
- 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.

- Feeling confused.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Joint pain or swelling.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat.
- Swollen gland.
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- Chest pain.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Liver problems have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these have been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have 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.

- This drug may cause change in eyesight like loss of eyesight. Most of the time this goes away when this drug is stopped. However, loss of eyesight that does not go away has happened. Call your doctor right away if you have any change in eyesight.

**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:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Decreased appetite.
- Stomach pain.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.

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 with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- Do not take products that have aluminum in them (like some antacids) within 4 hours after taking this drug.

## What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take 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 take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

- Store at room temperature 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.

## 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**

2023-11-20

**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.

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