



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Levothyroxine

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

Euthyrox; Levoxyl; Synthroid; Tirosint; Tirosint-SOL; Unithroid; Unithroid Direct

Brand Names: Canada

Eltroxin; Synthroid

Warning

- Do not use this drug to treat obesity or for weight loss. Very bad and sometimes deadly side effects may happen with this drug if it is taken in large doses or with other drugs for weight loss. Talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to add thyroid hormone to the body.
- It is used to manage thyroid cancer.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

All products:

- If your child has an allergy to this drug or any part of this drug.
- If your child is allergic to any drugs like this one or any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Overactive thyroid gland or weak adrenal gland.

Tablets and capsules:

- If your child has trouble swallowing.

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

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

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not run out of this drug.
- It may take several weeks to see the full effects.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), this drug may sometimes raise blood sugar. Talk with your child's doctor about how to keep your child's blood sugar under control.
- Have your child's blood sugar checked as you have been told by your child's doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause weak bones (osteoporosis) with doses that are too high. Talk with your child's doctor to see if your child has a higher risk of weak bones or if you have any questions.
- This drug may affect how much of some other drugs are in the body. If your child is taking other drugs, talk with the doctor. Your child may need to have blood work checked more closely while taking this drug with other drugs.
- If giving this drug to your child and your child's weight changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the

doctor.

- This drug may affect fertility. Fertility problems may lead to not being able to get pregnant or father a child. Talk with the doctor.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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 blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- A heartbeat that does not feel normal.

- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Lump on the neck.
- Headache.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Feeling more or less hungry.
- A change in weight without trying.
- Diarrhea.
- Stomach cramps.
- Throwing up.
- Feeling irritable.
- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Anxiety.
- Emotional ups and downs.
- Shakiness.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Bothered by heat.
- Sweating a lot.
- Fever.
- Leg cramps.
- Muscle weakness.
- Flushing.

- Bone pain.

If your child has menstrual periods:

- Period (menstrual) changes.

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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Hair loss may happen in some people in the first few months of using this drug. This most often goes back to normal.

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All oral products:

- Give on an empty stomach at least 30 to 60 minutes before breakfast.
- Do not give your child iron products, antacids that have aluminum or magnesium, or calcium carbonate within 4

hours before or 4 hours after taking this drug.

- If your child takes colesevelam, colestipol, cholestyramine, kayexalate, or sevelamer, do not give it within 4 hours before or 4 hours after your child takes this drug.
- Some other drugs may need to be given at some other time than this drug. If your child takes other drugs, check with the doctor or pharmacist to see if you need to give them to your child at some other time than this drug.
- Some foods like soybean flour (infant formula) may change how this drug works in your body. Talk with your doctor.
- If your child drinks grapefruit juice or eats grapefruit often, talk with your child's doctor.
- To gain the most benefit, do not miss giving your child doses.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.

Capsules:

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.

Tablets:

- Some products may cause choking, gagging, or trouble swallowing. These products must be given with a full glass of water. Ask the pharmacist if your child needs to take this

product with a full glass of water.

- If your child cannot swallow pills, the tablet may be crushed and mixed in 1 to 2 teaspoons (5 to 10 mL) of water right before giving to your child.

Tablets and capsules:

- There is more than 1 brand of this drug. One brand cannot safely be used for the other. The doctor will tell you about any needed change.

Oral solution:

- You may put this drug right in your child's mouth or you may mix it with water. If mixing with water, empty the contents into a cup with water in it. Squeeze the container over the cup at least 5 times until no more drug comes out. Stir well.
- After mixing, give the dose right away. Do not store for future use.
- Rinse cup with more water and have your child drink.
- Give this drug with water only; do not give with other drinks.

Injection:

- It is given as a shot into a vein.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

All oral products:

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

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

All oral products:

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

Capsules:

- Do not take this drug out of the blister pack until you are ready to give this drug to your child. Give this drug right away after opening the blister pack. Do not store the removed drug for future use.

Tablets:

- Some brands of this drug come in a blister pack. If this drug comes in a blister pack, do not take it out of the blister pack until you are ready to take it. Do not store the removed drug for future use.

Oral solution:

- Store in protective pouch until ready for use.
- Throw away 15 days after opening the pouch.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

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 child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Keep a list of all your child's drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your child's doctor.

- Talk with your child's doctor before giving your child any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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.

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This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

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

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