PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acetylcysteine

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: US

Acetadote

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat acetaminophen overdose.
- It is used to thin mucus in the lungs.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

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 have asthma.

Liquid (when breathed in):

- If you are taking any drugs that may lessen coughing. There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

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.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by 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.

Injection or liquid:

- The drug may change color when the bottle is opened. This is normal and not a cause for concern.
- There may be a bad odor to this drug. This most often goes away fast.

Liquid (when breathed in):

- This drug makes mucus easier to cough up. You may have more mucus when you first start taking this drug. If you are not able to cough up mucus, talk with your doctor about what to do.

Injection:

- If you weigh less than 88 pounds (40 kilograms) or you have to watch how much fluid you take in, talk with your doctor. The chance of too much fluid in the body may be raised with this drug. Too much fluid in the body could lead to low blood sodium levels, seizures, and death.

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. Rarely, some allergic reactions have been deadly.
- Shortness of breath.

Liquid:

- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- Throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.

Injection:

- Flushing.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.

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:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.

Liquid (when breathed in):

- Runny nose.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Clammy skin.
- Fever.

Injection:

- Redness of the skin where this drug was given.

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.

Liquid (when breathed in):

- For breathing in only as a liquid (solution) by a special machine (nebulizer) into the lungs.
- If this drug is used with a face mask, your face may feel sticky after using. Wash your face with water.
- Do not use if the solution is leaking or has particles.
- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.

Liquid (when given by mouth or feeding tube):

- Mix with juice or soda and drink.
- Take this drug within 1 hour of mixing.
- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.
- If you throw up within 1 hour of taking this drug, take 1 more dose.
- Those who have feeding tubes may use this drug. Use as you have been told. Flush the feeding tube after this drug is given.

Injection:

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Liquid:

- 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.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

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

Liquid:

- Store unopened vials at room temperature.
- Store opened vials in a refrigerator. Throw away any part not used after 4 days.
- Protect from light.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your 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 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,

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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.

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