Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acitretin

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: Canada

MINT-Acitretin; Soriatane; TARO-Acitretin

Warning

- Do not take this drug if you are pregnant or want to get pregnant within 3 years after stopping this drug. The risk of severe and sometimes deadly birth defects is very high if you take this drug during pregnancy or if you get pregnant within 3 years after stopping this drug. The risk of losing an unborn baby is also raised, and premature births have happened. Your doctor will talk about the risks before you start this drug. You must use 2 kinds of birth control that you can trust 1 month before starting this drug, during treatment, and for 3 years after the last dose. Pregnancy tests will be done before you start this drug, while you take it, and for 3 years after the last dose. If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 3 years after stopping it, call your doctor right away.
- If you are able to get pregnant and you may not use 2 kinds of birth control during and after treatment with this drug, talk with your doctor. This drug may not be right for you.
- If you are able to get pregnant, you must avoid alcohol while taking this drug and for 2 months after stopping it. This includes all drinks, food, drugs, or products that have alcohol in them. Alcohol will make this drug

stay in the body longer and may raise the risk of birth defects for longer than 3 years after stopping this drug. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

- Small amounts of this drug are found in semen. It is not known if this may lead to any risk to the unborn baby. Talk with your doctor.
- Do not donate blood while using this drug and for 3 years after stopping.
- Severe and sometimes deadly liver problems have happened with this drug. 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.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat psoriasis.
- 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?

- 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 any of these health problems: High cholesterol, kidney disease, or liver disease.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Demeclocycline, doxycycline, minocycline, tetracycline, a product that has vitamin A in it, a product that is like vitamin A, or St. John's wort.
- If you are taking methotrexate.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug. You will also need to avoid breast-feeding after you stop this drug until there is no more of this drug in your body. Talk with your doctor to see how long you need to avoid breast-feeding after you stop this drug.

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?

For all patients taking this drug:

- 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 or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.
- It may take a few months to see the full effect.
- Skin may look worse before it looks better.
- Have your blood work and bone density checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), this drug may sometimes raise blood sugar. Talk with your doctor about how to keep your blood sugar under control.
- High cholesterol and triglyceride levels have happened with this drug. These changes may raise the chance of blood clots or heart and brain blood vessel disease like heart attack or stroke. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.
- You may get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- Trouble seeing at night has happened with this drug. This may be sudden. This may clear up after you stop the drug but sometimes it may not go away.

Use care at night when driving or doing other tasks that call for clear eyesight. Keep work space well lit. If you have trouble seeing at night while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Do not use progestin-only birth control pills (minipills). They may not work well. Talk with your doctor.
- If you have sex without using 2 kinds of birth control that you can trust, if you think you may be pregnant, or if you miss your period, call your doctor right away.

Males:

- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.

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.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat; seizures; loss of appetite; or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of a blood clot like chest, arm, back, neck, or jaw pain or pressure;

coughing up blood; numbness or weakness on 1 side of your body; trouble speaking or thinking; change in balance; change in eyesight; shortness of breath; or swelling, warmth, or pain in the leg or arm.

- Signs of depression, thoughts of suicide, nervousness, emotional ups and downs, thinking that is not normal, anxiety, or lack of interest in life.
- Mean actions or thoughts of fighting.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Severe muscle pain or weakness.
- Bone or joint pain.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Change in how contact lenses feel in the eyes.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat.
- Swelling.
- Weight gain.
- Stomach pain.
- Severe diarrhea.
- Bleeding from rectum or rectal pain.
- Blood in the urine.
- Thinning of the skin.
- Severe and sometimes deadly pancreas problems (pancreatitis) have happened with this drug. This could happen at any time during treatment. Signs of pancreatitis include very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very upset stomach or throwing up. Call your doctor right away if you have any of these signs.
- This drug may cause a severe and sometimes deadly problem called capillary leak syndrome (CLS). CLS may lead to low blood pressure, abnormal heartbeat, chest pain, or heart attack. It may also lead to lung or breathing problems, bleeding or lower blood flow in the stomach or bowel, kidney

problems, swelling, or feeling confused. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

- Raised pressure in the brain has happened with this drug. This can cause long lasting loss of eyesight and sometimes death. Call your doctor right away if you have a bad headache, dizziness, upset stomach or throwing up, or seizures. Call your doctor right away if you have weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, or 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:

- Dry mouth, eyes, skin, or lips.
- Hair loss.
- Eye irritation.
- Eyebrow or eyelash thinning or loss.
- It is common to have chapped lips; peeling fingertips, palms, and soles; itching; scaly skin; weak nails; sticky or fragile skin; runny or dry nose; or nosebleeds. Ask the doctor or pharmacist for a lotion or cream to help with drying or chapping. Call your doctor if any of these effects are severe, bother you, or do not go away.

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 this drug with food.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.

What do I do if I miss a 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.
- Protect from heat and light.
- 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.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any

questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, 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.

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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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