PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Donepezil

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

Adlarity [DSC]; Aricept

Brand Names: Canada

ACH-Donepezil; AG-Donepezil; APO-Donepezil; Aricept; Auro-Donepezil; BIO-Donepezil; JAMP-Donepezil; M-Donepezil; Mar-Donepezil; MINT-Donepezil; NAT-Donepezil [DSC]; NRA-Donepezil; PMS-Donepezil; PRO-Donepezil HCl; SANDOZ Donepezil; TARO-Donepezil; TEVA-Donepezil

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat dementia in people with Alzheimer's disease.
- 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.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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.
- This drug is not a cure for Alzheimer's disease. Stay under the care of 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.

Skin patch:

- Avoid use of heat sources (such as sunlamps, tanning beds, heating pads, electric blankets, heat lamps, saunas, hot tubs, heated waterbeds). Avoid long, hot baths or sunbathing. Your temperature may rise and cause too much drug to pass into your body.

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.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Slow or abnormal heartbeat.

- Trouble passing urine.
- Seizures.
- Heartburn.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- Trouble breathing that is new or worse.

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 dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Muscle cramps.
- Decreased appetite.
- Weight loss.
- Headache.

Skin patch:

- Constipation.
- Skin reactions have happened with this drug. This includes redness and itching. Call your doctor right away if you have any of these skin reactions that do not get better within 2 days after the patch is taken off: severe redness or swelling, peeling or blistered skin, or a skin reaction that has spread from where this drug is being used.

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 oral products:

- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- Take this drug at bedtime.
- Take with or without food.
- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.

23 mg tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.

Oral-disintegrating tablet:

- Wash and dry your hands before you take this drug. Do not touch the tablet with wet or damp hands.
- Place on the tongue and let dissolve.
- Do not swallow it whole.
- Do not take this drug out of the blister pack until you are ready to take it. Take this drug right away after opening the blister pack. Do not store the removed drug for future use.

- Drink a glass of water after the tablet has dissolved.

Skin patch:

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- Do not put on a cold patch. Before opening a pouch, let the pouch come to room temperature. Do not heat. Put the patch on right after taking out of a pouch.
- Do not use if the pouch that holds this drug is torn, open, or not sealed all the way.
- Do not cut or divide patches. Do not use patches that are damaged.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Put the patch on clean, dry, healthy skin on the back. Do not put on the spine. If you are not able to put it on the back, you may put on the upper buttocks or upper outer thigh.
- If there is hair where you are putting the patch, clip the hair as close to the skin as you can. Do not shave the hair.
- Do not put on skin where you have just used creams, oils, lotions, powder, or other skin products. The patch may not stick as well.
- Do not put on skin that is cut, red, or irritated. Do not put on skin that will be rubbed by tight clothes.
- Move the patch site with each new patch. Do not put on the same site for 14 days.
- If the patch falls off, put a new one on. Start a new schedule based on when the new patch is put on.
- Do not put on more than 1 patch at a time.
- After you take off a skin patch, be sure to fold the sticky sides of the patch to each other. Throw away used patches where children and pets cannot get to them.

- If you get this drug in your eyes, wash right away with water. If you have eye irritation that lasts or a change in eyesight, call your doctor.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

All oral products:

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- If you miss 7 days of this drug, call your doctor to find out what to do.

Skin patch:

- Put on a missed patch as soon as you think about it after taking off the old one.
- After putting on a new patch, start a new schedule based on when the new patch is put on.
- Call your doctor if treatment with this drug has been stopped.

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

All oral products:

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

Skin patch:

- Store in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- Store in pouch until ready for use.
- Put on the patch within 24 hours after taking the pouch out of the refrigerator.

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, 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

2026-04-17

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

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