PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Erythromycin (Systemic

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

E.E.S. 400; E.E.S. Granules; Ery-Tab [DSC]; EryPed 200 [DSC]; EryPed 400; Erythrocin Lactobionate; Erythrocin Stearate [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

Eryc [DSC]; Erythro-Base [DSC]; Erythrocin

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat or prevent bacterial infections.
- 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: Long QTc on ECG or other heartbeat that is not normal, slow heartbeat, or low potassium or magnesium levels.
- If you take any drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) that must not be taken with this drug, like certain drugs that are used for mood problems, a heartbeat that is not normal, or migraine headaches. There are many drugs that must not be taken with 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.

- Have your blood work checked if you are on this drug for a long time. Talk with your doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- Do not use longer than you have been told. A second infection may happen.
- If you are on a low-sodium or sodium-free diet, talk with your doctor. Some of these products have sodium.
- If you have myasthenia gravis, talk with your doctor. Call your doctor if your signs get worse. Signs of myasthenia gravis have also happened in people who do not have it. Call your doctor right away if you have new or worse muscle weakness, trouble chewing or swallowing, trouble breathing, droopy eyelids, or change in eyesight like blurred eyesight or seeing double.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- 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.

Newborns:

- A severe stomach problem has happened in newborns (up to 42 days old) taking this drug. Call the doctor right away if your baby throws up, has diarrhea, gets irritable, or gets a rash with feeding.

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 liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of a very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or

eyes.

- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- A fast heartbeat.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly type of heartbeat that is not normal (long QT on ECG) has happened with this drug. Some other drugs taken along with this drug may add to this effect. Get medical help right away if your heartbeat does not feel normal.
- Diarrhea is common with antibiotics. Sometimes, diarrhea may be caused by a certain bowel infection (C diff). C diff may happen during treatment or within a few months after the last dose. This infection can be severe or even deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have stomach cramps, fever, long-lasting diarrhea, very loose or watery stools, or bloody stools. Check with your doctor before treating diarrhea.
- Hearing loss has rarely happened in people taking this drug. This most often goes back to normal. The chance may be higher if you have kidney problems or if you take high doses of this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have hearing problems like hearing loss.

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:

- Diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.

Injection:

- Irritation where this drug is 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.

All oral products:

- Take with or without food, unless your doctor tells you to take it another way.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Long-acting products:

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

Liquid (suspension):

- Shake well before use.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

Injection:

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

What do I do if I miss a dose?

All oral products:

- 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?
Tablets and capsules:

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

Liquid (suspension):

- Some brands of this drug need to be stored in a refrigerator. Some brands of this drug need to be stored at room temperature. If you have questions about how to store this drug, talk with your pharmacist.
- Be sure you know how long you can store this drug before you need to throw it away.

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, 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

2025-01-23

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.

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