Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Glatiramer Acetate

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

Copaxone; Glatopa

Brand Names: Canada

Copaxone; Glatect

Warning

- Severe allergic reactions have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these have been life-threatening or deadly. Allergic reactions may happen after the first dose or within years after starting treatment with this drug. Most often, allergic reactions happened within 1 hour after getting this drug. Sometimes, allergic reactions may have some of the same signs as a reaction that happens right after an injection. Get medical care right away if you have signs like rash; sudden shortness of breath, trouble breathing, or wheezing; trouble swallowing or talking; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat; seizures; or dizziness or passing out.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to lower the number of setbacks with MS (multiple sclerosis).

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?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- 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.

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 infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- 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.
- Chest pain.
- Feeling confused.
- Sweating a lot.
- Swollen gland.
- Some people have had a reaction right after or within minutes after an injection. Tell your doctor right away if you have flushing, chest pain, a fast or abnormal heartbeat, anxiety, shortness of breath, tightness in your throat, rash, hives, itching, swelling, or any other bad effects after getting this drug.
- Damage to the fatty tissue under your skin can happen with this drug. Rarely, death of skin tissue may happen. Call your doctor right away if you have pain, color,

temperature change, or a dent or lump where the injection was given.

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:

- Pain, redness, swelling, or other reaction where the injection was given.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Back pain.
- Flu-like signs.
- Nose or throat irritation.

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.

- It is given as a shot into the fatty part of the skin of the stomach, thigh, upper arm, or outer hip.
- If you will be giving yourself the shot, your doctor or nurse will teach you how to give the shot.
- This drug may be given as a prefilled syringe. Some products may also be given using an autoinjector. If using an autoinjector, be sure it is the right one. Not all autoinjectors will work with this drug. Using the wrong one can lead to getting the wrong dose. If you have questions, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.
- If stored in a refrigerator, let this drug come to room temperature before using it. Leave it at room temperature for 20 minutes. Do not heat this drug.
- Move the site where you give the shot with each shot. Do not use the same site more than 1 time in a week.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- This drug is colorless to a faint yellow. Do not use if the solution changes color.
- Wash your hands before and after use.

- If you see a small air bubble in the device, do not get rid of it.
- Do not give into skin that is scarred or dented.
- Throw syringe away after use. Do not use the same syringe more than one time.
- Throw away needles in a needle/sharp disposal box. Do not reuse needles or other items. When the box is full, follow all local rules for getting rid of it. Talk with a doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- 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.

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

- Store in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- Do not use if it has been frozen.
- If needed, you may store this drug at room temperature for up to 1 month. Write down the date you take this drug out of the refrigerator. If stored at room temperature and not used within 1 month, throw this drug away.

- 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

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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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