PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Levalbuterol

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

Xopenex Concentrate [DSC]; Xopenex HFA; Xopenex [DSC]

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to open the airways in lung diseases where spasm may cause breathing problems.

## 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 are using another drug like this one. If you are not sure, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- If you are taking inhaled epinephrine.

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.
- Do not run out of this drug.
- Do not take more of this drug or use it more often than you have been told. Deaths have happened when too much of this drug was taken. Talk with your doctor.
- It is important that you have enough of this drug to use for sudden or severe breathing problems. Be sure to get a refill before you run out.
- Call your doctor right away if your normal dose does not work well, if your signs get worse, or if you need to use this drug more often than normal.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely.
- 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.

## Liquid for breathing in:

- If the patient is a child younger than 6 years of age, talk with the doctor. This drug has not been shown to be safe and effective in children younger than 6 years of age.

## Inhaler:

- If the patient is a child younger than 4 years of age, talk with the doctor. This drug has not been shown to be safe and effective in children younger than 4 years of age.

## 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 or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Chest pain or pressure, a fast heartbeat, or an abnormal heartbeat.
- This drug may sometimes cause severe breathing problems. This may be life-threatening. When this happens with an inhaler or with liquid for breathing in, most of the time it happens right after a dose and after the first use of a new canister or vial of this drug. If you have trouble breathing, breathing that is worse, wheezing, or coughing, get medical help right away.

## 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:

- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Dizziness or headache.
- Runny nose.
- Shakiness.
- Throat irritation.

- Throwing up.

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 for breathing in:

- For breathing in only as a liquid (solution) by a special machine (nebulizer) into the lungs.
- Only use the type of nebulizer that you have been told to use. If you are not sure what type of nebulizer to use, talk with the doctor.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- Some of these products must be mixed with saline before use. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if your product needs to be mixed.
- Do not mix other drugs in nebulizer.
- Keep out of your eyes.
- If you are using more than 1 inhaled drug, ask the doctor which drug to use first.

### Inhaler:

- For breathing into the lungs.
- Shake well before use.
- Prepare the inhaler before first use or when the inhaler has not been used for 3 days. Spray 4 test sprays into the air.
- Put the cap back on after you are done using your dose.
- A spacer may be used with the inhaler for easy use.
- Follow how to clean carefully.
- Some inhalers have a dose counter to keep track of how many doses are left. If your inhaler has a dose counter, throw the inhaler away when the dose counter reaches "0."
- Keep out of your eyes.
- If you are using more than 1 inhaled drug, ask the doctor which drug to use first.

## What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If you use this drug on a regular basis, use 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 use 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is used on an as needed basis. Do not use more often than told by the doctor.

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

### All products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- 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.

### Liquid for breathing in:

- Protect from heat and light.
- Store unused containers in foil pouch until use.
- After opening the foil pouch, be sure you know how long the product is good and how to store it. Ask the doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

### Inhaler:

- Protect from light.
- Store with the mouthpiece down.
- Protect from heat or open flame. Do not puncture or burn even if it seems empty.

## 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.

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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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