PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Misoprostol

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

Cytotec

Brand Names: Canada

JAMP-Misoprostol

Warning

- This drug may cause birth defects, loss of the unborn baby, or premature birth if you take it while you are pregnant. It may also cause the uterus to tear (rupture). The chance of a rupture is raised as you get further along in pregnancy, or if you have had uterine surgery like a C-section in the past. A rupture can lead to very bad bleeding, and your uterus may need to be removed. Sometimes, a rupture has been deadly. If you are taking this drug to prevent gastric ulcers, do not take it if you are pregnant.
- Most of the time, this drug is not for use in people who are able to get pregnant. However, there may be times when it is used in these people. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- If you are able to get pregnant, a pregnancy test will be done to show that you are NOT pregnant before starting this drug. Talk with your doctor.
- Start taking this drug only on the second or third day of your next normal menstrual period after the negative pregnancy test.
- If you may become pregnant, you must use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask your doctor how long to use birth control. If you get pregnant, call your doctor right away.
- Do not share this drug with others.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to prevent nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID)-associated gastric ulcers in patients with a history of ulcers.
- 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 are getting oxytocin.

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?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- High fever with fast heartbeat, seizures, or feeling confused or agitated have happened when this drug was used for bleeding after delivering a baby. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your 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.

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:

- Stomach pain or cramps.
- Upset stomach.
- Diarrhea is common with this drug and can be severe. Call your doctor to find out what to do if you have diarrhea or stomach cramps. You will need to take care not to become dehydrated. Do not try to treat diarrhea without first checking with your doctor.

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 meals and at bedtime or as you have been told by your doctor.
- Do not take antacids that have magnesium with this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, with food.
- 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 at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- 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

2025-04-14

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.

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