Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Naltrexone

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

Vivitrol

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Naltrexone; ReVia

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to help treat alcohol use disorder.
- It is used to help treat opioid use disorder. Opioid drugs include heroin and prescription pain drugs like oxycodone and morphine.
- 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 taking an opioid drug like morphine or oxycodone, have opioid use disorder, or are having withdrawal signs.
- If you have taken a pain drug within the past 7 to 14 days.

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.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by 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 take opioid drugs while you are taking this drug. Opioid drugs will not work. Do not take more opioid drugs to try to get them to work. Doing this may cause severe injury, coma, or death.
- Drugs called naloxone and nalmefene can be used to help treat an opioid overdose. Your doctor may order naloxone or nalmefene for you to keep with you if it is needed. If you have questions about how to get or use naloxone or nalmefene, talk with your doctor or pharmacist. If you think there has been an opioid overdose, get medical care right away even if naloxone or nalmefene has been used.
- If you have opioid use disorder and are given this drug, you may have signs of opioid withdrawal. Some of these signs are sweating, shaking, fever, chills, diarrhea, upset stomach, throwing up, stomach cramps, goosebumps, body aches, anxiety, feeling irritable, yawning, or fast heartbeat.
- 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.

Tablets:

- Have patient safety card with you at all times.
- People taking this drug to keep an opioid-free state may get more effects from opioid drugs when this drug is stopped. Even low amounts of opioid drugs or amounts that you have used before may lead to overdose and death. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

Injection:

- After you get a dose of this drug, its blocking effect on opioids will go away over time. Low amounts of opioid drugs or amounts that you have used before may lead to overdose and death. This effect may also be seen when it is time for your next dose of this drug, if you miss a dose, if you stop treatment, or if you have gone through treatment and are opioid-free.
- Very bad skin problems have happened where the shot was given. Sometimes surgery was needed for these skin problems. Talk with the doctor.
- A type of lung infection caused by an allergic reaction has happened with this drug. This may need to be treated in a hospital.

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:

All products:

- 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 high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- New or worse behavior or mood changes like depression or thoughts of suicide.
- Feeling confused.
- Trouble breathing, slow breathing, or shallow breathing.
- Sex problems in males.

Injection:

- Signs of lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Area that feels hard, blisters, dark scab, lumps, open wound, pain, swelling, or other very bad skin irritation where the shot 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:

All products:

- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Anxiety.
- Headache.
- Muscle cramps.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.

- Unusual thirst.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Back, muscle, or joint pain.
- Signs of a common cold.
- Tooth pain.

Injection:

- Irritation where the shot is given.
- Nose or throat irritation.
- Dry mouth.

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.

Tablets:

- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Injection:

- It is given as a shot into a muscle.

What do I do if I miss a dose?
Tablets:

- 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:

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

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

2026-01-15

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.

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