PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Nitroglycerin

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

GoNitro [DSC]; Nitro-Bid; Nitro-Dur; Nitro-Time; Nitrolingual; NitroMist [DSC]; Nitrostat; Rectiv

Brand Names: Canada

MYLAN-Nitro; Nitro-Dur; Nitroject; Nitrolingual; RHO-Nitro; Trinipatch 0.2; Trinipatch 0.4; Trinipatch 0.6

What is this drug used for?

For rectal use:

- It is used to treat anal pain.

Injection:

- It is used to treat high blood pressure.
- It is used to treat heart failure (weak heart).
- It is used to treat chest pain or pressure.

- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

All other products:

- It is used to treat or prevent chest pain or pressure.
- 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?

All products:

- 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: Anemia, raised pressure in the head (like with bleeding in the brain or head injury), or recent heart attack.
- If you have heart problems.
- If you have low blood volume.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Avanafil, riociguat, sildenafil, tadalafil, or vardenafil.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, or methylergonovine.

Patch:

- If you have an allergy to adhesive.

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 or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.
- Check your blood pressure as you have been told.

- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this drug.
- 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.

Capsules, patch, and skin ointment:

- Do not use this drug to treat sudden chest pain. It will not help. Talk with your doctor.
- If you have been taking this drug for a long time without a break, it may not work as well. This is known as tolerance. Be sure to have a “nitrate-free” period of time each day. Talk with your doctor if this drug stops working well. Do not take more than ordered.
- Do not stop taking this drug all of a sudden without calling your doctor. You may have a greater risk of side effects. If you need to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor.

Patch:

- The patch may have metal. Take off the patch before an MRI or cardioversion.
- Your skin may be red or feel warm after you take the patch off. This is normal. If these effects do not go away, call your doctor.

Skin: Ointment (topical):

- This drug may stain clothing or fabric. Protect clothing and fabrics from staining.

Spray and all under the tongue (sublingual) products:

- Taking more of this drug or taking it more often than you have been told may cause it to not work as well. This is known as tolerance. Talk with your doctor if this drug stops working well. Do not take more than ordered.

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.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat.
- Flushing.
- Blurred eyesight.
- Dry mouth.
- Sweating a lot.
- Pale skin.
- Severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Restlessness.
- Feeling very tired or weak.

Capsules, patch, and skin ointment:

- Chest pain that is new or worse.

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:

- Dizziness or headache.

Spray and all under the tongue (sublingual) products:

- Mouth tingling.
- Burning.

Patch:

- Skin irritation.

Capsules, patch, rectal ointment, and skin ointment:

- You may have headaches when you start taking this drug. Most of the time it gets better with time. Do not change how you use this drug to avoid these headaches. Talk with your doctor for ways to lessen this side effect.

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.

Capsules:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Patch:

- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Put patch on at the same time of day.
- Do not put on right after a shower or bath.
- Put patch on clean, dry, healthy skin.
- Put patch on a site without hair.
- Wear only one patch at a time.
- Put the patch in a new area each time you change the patch.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel

well.

- If the patch falls off, replace with a new one on a new site.

Skin: Ointment (topical):

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Use the applicator or dose-measuring paper to spread in a thin layer. Put on your chest or other area.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Under the tongue (sublingual) tablet:

- Sit down before use.
- Place under tongue and let dissolve all the way. Do not chew, suck or swallow tablet.
- If you have dry mouth, it may help to dissolve this drug if you have a small sip of water before placing it under your tongue.

Under the tongue (sublingual) powder:

- Sit down before use.
- Empty the packet contents under your tongue. Close your mouth and breathe normally through your nose. Let the powder dissolve before you swallow. Do not rinse your mouth or spit for 5 minutes after a dose.

Spray:

- Prime pump before first use.
- Some products may have different ways to prime the pump. Some pumps may also need to be primed if not used for different periods of time. Follow how and when to prime as you have been told.
- Sit down before use.
- Do not shake.
- Spray on or under tongue.
- Do not inhale the spray.
- Avoid swallowing after use.
- Do not spit out this drug or rinse your mouth for 5 to 10 minutes after use.
- Check how much fluid is left in the pump on a regular basis. Be sure you know when you need to get a refill.
- This drug may catch on fire. Do not use near an open

flame or while smoking.

Spray and all under the tongue (sublingual) products:

- Your doctor will tell you how to take this drug. Be sure you know what your dose is, how often you can take a dose, and when you may need to get medical help. If your doctor does not tell you how to take this drug or if you are not sure how to take it, talk with your doctor.
- If using this drug to prevent chest pain, use it 5 to 10 minutes before activity that may lead to chest pain.

For rectal use:

- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Cover your finger with plastic-wrap, a surgical glove, or a finger cot.
- Use the dosing guide on the box to put the ointment on your covered finger.
- Place the finger with the ointment on it into the anal canal up to the first finger joint.
- Smear the ointment inside the anus.
- You may also put the ointment on the outside of your anus.
- Keep out of your mouth, nose, vagina, and eyes (may burn).

Injection:

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

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Spray and all under the tongue (sublingual) products:

- This drug is taken on an as needed basis. Do not take more often than told by the doctor.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

All other 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.

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

All products other than injection:

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

Patch:

- Throw away all patches in a sealed container away from children and pets.

For rectal use:

- Keep the tube tightly closed. Use within 8 weeks of first opening.

Under the tongue (sublingual) tablet:

- Store in original container.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- Do not use if this drug is out of date.

Spray:

- Protect from heat or open flame. Do not puncture or burn even if it seems empty.

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

2025-01-22

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.

Nitroglycerin - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center