Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Salicylic Acid

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

AcNesic [DSC]; Atrix Medicated Formula [OTC]; Atrix System 1 [OTC]; Bensal HP [DSC]; Betasal [OTC]; DermacinRx Atrix Antibac Wash [OTC]; DermacinRx Atrix Clarify Toner [OTC]; DermacinRx Dermazene Spot; DermacinRx Salicylic Acid; Dermeleve Scalp Psoriasis [OTC]; DHS Sal [OTC] [DSC]; FT Medicated Corn Removers [OTC]; GoodSense Corn & Callus [OTC]; GoodSense Liquid Wart Remover [OTC]; Gordofilm; Keralyt; Keralyt 5 [OTC]; Keralyt Scalp [DSC]; Keralyt [OTC]; Neutrogena Oil-Free Acne Wash [OTC]; P & S [OTC]; PanOxyl Acne Banishing Body [OTC]; PanOxyl Acne Cleansing Bar [OTC]; Panoxyl Acne [OTC]; PanOxyl Clarifying Exfoliant [OTC]; RayaSal [DSC]; Salicate; Salicylic Acid Wart Remover [DSC]; Salimez Forte [DSC]; Salimez [DSC]; Salvax [DSC]; Salycim; Salyntra [DSC]; Salzix Wart Remover [OTC]; UltraSal-ER; Virasal; Xalix

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat pimples (acne).
- It is used to get rid of calluses, corns, and warts.
- It is used to treat psoriasis.
- It is used to control seborrheic dermatitis.
- 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?

For all uses of 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.

For calluses, corns, or warts:

- If you have any of these health problems: High blood sugar (diabetes) or poor blood flow.

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.
- Certain acne products that contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid can rarely cause very bad and sometimes life-threatening allergic reactions or very bad irritation. Before first use, you may need to follow certain steps to make sure you do not have an allergic reaction. Use this drug as you were told by the doctor or read the package label. Talk with the doctor.
- Do not put on open wounds, cuts, or irritated skin.
- Use care when using on a large part of the skin. Talk with the doctor.
- Do not use this drug on birthmarks, moles, or warts with hair growth; or cervical, genital, or oral warts.
- If you use this drug too often, your skin problem may become worse.

- Use of other skin products while using this drug may cause more irritation.
- Talk with your doctor before you use other drugs or products on your skin. This includes soaps.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Be sure your doctor and lab workers know you use this drug.
- Some of these drugs may catch on fire. Do not use near an open flame or while smoking.
- This drug may cause harm if swallowed. If this drug is swallowed, call a doctor or poison control center right away.
- Do not give to children and teenagers who have or are getting better from flu signs, chickenpox, or other viral infections due to the chance of Reye's syndrome. Reye's syndrome causes very bad problems to the brain and liver.
- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.
- Different brands of this drug may be for use in different ages of children. Talk with the doctor before giving this drug to a child.
- 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.
- If you are breast-feeding, do not put this drug on the chest. Talk with your doctor.

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.

- Mood changes.
- Fast breathing.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Ringing in the ears, hearing loss, or any other changes in hearing.
- Dizziness.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Diarrhea.

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:

- Skin irritation.
- Dry skin.
- Burning or stinging.
- Peeling.

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.

For all uses of this drug:

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- If this drug gets in the eyes, rinse with cool water.
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Do not breathe in the vapors.
- Wash your hands before and after use. If your hand is the treated area, do not wash your hand after use.

Foam:

- Prime pump before first use.
- Some of these drugs need to be shaken before use. Be sure you know if this product needs to be shaken before using it.
- Put foam on affected part and rub in gently.

For pimples (acne):
Cream, gel, liquid, or lotion:

- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- Some of these drugs need to be shaken before use. Be sure you know if this product needs to be shaken before using it.

Wash:

- Wet skin.
- Put on the affected skin, work into a lather, and rinse well.

Pad:

- Use pad to put on a thin layer of salicylic acid to affected part.
- Do not leave pad on skin.

For calluses, corns, or warts:

- You may soak the affected part for 5 minutes.
- You may cover with a thin dressing if told to do so by the doctor.

Gel and liquid:

- Put on affected skin and let dry.

Cream:

- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.

For psoriasis or seborrheic dermatitis:
Cream, gel, liquid, and ointment:

- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- If the product is for use on the scalp, follow how to use as you have been told or read the package insert.

Shampoo:

- Sometimes this drug is put onto wet hair. Sometimes it needs to be put onto dry hair. Be sure you know how to use this drug. If you are not sure, talk with the doctor or pharmacist.
- Repeat treatment as you have been told by the doctor.

Shampoo with gel kit:

- To use shampoo as a scalp treatment, do **not** wet hair. Put on affected areas using the applicator. Leave on as you have been told. Rinse fully with water. If wanted, you may shampoo the hair with a non-medicated shampoo.
- To use gel on the scalp, put on affected areas using the applicator. Leave on as you have been told. Wash off with medicated shampoo or warm water.
- To use gel on skin, use at bedtime. Soak the area for at least 5 minutes before using this drug. Put on a thin layer and rub in gently. Cover with a

dressing as told. Wash off in the morning.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- 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 put on 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

All products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- Protect from heat or open flame.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- 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.

Foam:

- Store upright with the cap on.
- Do not puncture.

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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