PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Barium

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

E-Z-Disk; E-Z-HD; E-Z-Paque; E-Z-Paste [DSC]; Liquid E-Z-Paque; Liquid Polibar Plus [DSC]; NeuLumEX [DSC]; Readi-Cat 2; Tagitol V; Vanilla SilQ; Varibar Honey; Varibar Nectar; Varibar Pudding; Varibar Thin Honey; Varibar Thin Liquid

What is this drug used for?

- It is used before an x-ray or other test like it.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

All products:

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has had any of these health problems: Blockage, hole, bleeding, injury, burn, or blood flow problems in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract; slow-moving GI (gastrointestinal) tract; or a problem called toxic megacolon.
- If your child has recently had a hole in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract, GI surgery, or radiation to the pelvic area.

All oral products:

- If your child has trouble swallowing or has inhaled food, liquids, saliva, or vomit into the lungs.
- If your child has a hole between the esophagus and trachea (the swallowing and breathing tubes).

Liquid (suspension):

- If your child is not able to break down fructose.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- This drug stops many drugs from getting into the body. If your child takes other drugs, check with the doctor to see if you need to give them at some other time than this drug.
- To prevent constipation or bowel block from this drug, the doctor may have you give your child a laxative like milk of magnesia or lactulose after using this drug. Follow what the doctor has told you.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids after the test is over unless told to drink less liquid by the doctor.
- Rarely, this drug may leak into the blood vessels from the GI (gastrointestinal) tract. Side effects have included blood clots and very low

blood pressure. Sometimes, this can be deadly. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.

Capsules:

- You may need to avoid giving your child laxatives, enemas, or suppositories for some time before giving this drug. Follow what the doctor has told you.

Liquid (suspension):

- Some products have sorbitol in them. Very bad health problems like low blood sugar, bleeding, and kidney failure have happened when people who are not able to break down fructose took a product with sorbitol in it. Talk with the doctor.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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. Rarely, some allergic reactions have been life-threatening.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Severe constipation or stomach pain. These may be signs of a severe bowel problem.

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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

All oral products:

- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Stomach cramps.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Tablets:

- Have your child swallow whole with 1 or 2 swallows of water. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.

Capsules:

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.
- If your child cannot swallow this drug whole, you may sprinkle the contents on applesauce. If you do this, have your child swallow the mixture right away. Do not store the mixture for future use.

Liquid (suspension):

- Shake well before use.
- Most of the time, this drug is taken by mouth. Give as you have been told by the doctor.
- Be sure you know how to give this drug with regard to food. Talk with your child's doctor or pharmacist.
- If you spill any of this drug while shaking it or giving it, call the doctor to see if your child's procedure may need to be rescheduled.
- Some products may be given as an enema. If your child is using this drug as an enema, it will be given rectally by the doctor.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

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

- Most of the time, this drug will be given in a hospital or doctor's office. If stored at home, follow how to store as you were told by the doctor.
- 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 child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any

questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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

2026-10-12

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.

Barium - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center