PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Benzoyl Peroxide

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

Acne Medication 10 [OTC]; Acne Medication 2.5 [OTC] [DSC]; Acne Medication 5 [OTC]; Acne Medication [OTC]; Acne-Clear [OTC]; Advanced Acne Wash [OTC]; Benzac AC Wash; BenzEFoam [OTC] [DSC]; BenzePrO; BenzePrO Creamy Wash; BenzePrO Foaming Cloths; BenzePrO [OTC]; Benzoyl Peroxide Acne Wash [OTC]; Benzoyl Peroxide Wash [OTC]; BP Gel [OTC] [DSC]; BP Wash [OTC]; BPO Foaming Cloths [OTC]; BPO [OTC] [DSC]; Clearskin [OTC]; Differin Cleanser [OTC]; Enzoclear [DSC]; Epsolay; Inova [DSC]; Lintera Wash [OTC] [DSC]; Medpura Benzoyl Peroxide [OTC]; Neutrogena Clear Pore [OTC]; PanOxyl Acne Clearing Spot [OTC]; PanOxyl Acne Foaming Wash [OTC]; PanOxyl Acne Treatment [OTC]; PanOxyl Creamy Wash [OTC]; PanOxyl [OTC]; PR Benzoyl Peroxide Wash; Zaclir Cleansing

Brand Names: Canada

Benzac W Wash10 Nettoyant; Epsolay

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat pimples (acne).

Cream (for rosacea):

- This drug is not approved for use in children. However, the doctor may decide the benefits of taking this drug outweigh the risks. If your child has been given this drug, ask the doctor for information about the benefits and

risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions about giving this drug to your child.

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

- 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 very sensitive skin.

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?

- 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.
- 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 your child does not have an allergic reaction. Put on this drug as you were told by the doctor or read the package label. Talk with the doctor.
- Do not put on cuts, scrapes, eczema, or damaged skin.
- Do not put on sunburned skin.
- Do not leave this drug on the skin longer than you have been told by the doctor.
- Use of other skin products while using this drug may cause more irritation.

- To help with skin reactions, moisturize your child's skin as the doctor has told you.
- Talk with your child's doctor before you use other drugs or products on your child's skin. This includes soaps.
- Your child may get sunburned more easily. Avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and dress your child in clothing and eyewear that protects from the sun.
- Use care when putting on. It may bleach hair or colored fabric.
- This drug may cause harm if swallowed. If this drug is swallowed, call a doctor or poison control center right away.

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.

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.

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:

- Burning, itching, dryness, or other irritation where this drug was used.
- Stinging.
- Scaling.
- Peeling.
- Feeling of warmth.

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.

All products:

- Do not give by mouth. Use on your child's skin only. Keep out of your child's mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- If this drug gets in any of these areas, have your child rinse well with water.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Makeup may be used after the skin has dried.
- If you see this drug or white marks on your child's skin after putting on, your child may be using too much.
- It may take several weeks to see the full effects.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child's signs get better.

Bar, wash, and cleanser:

- Use this drug to wash your child's affected skin. Rinse with warm water, then pat dry.

Cloth:

- Wet cloth with water and work into lather.
- Wash your child's face with a cloth for 10 to 20 seconds.
- Rinse face and pat dry.

Face mask:

- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- Wait 15 to 25 minutes for the mask to dry, then rinse with warm water, and pat dry.

All other skin products:

- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- You may need to rinse the affected skin after some time. Follow how to use as you have been told by the doctor or read the package insert.

Foam and lotion:

- Shake well before use.

Foam:

- You will need to prime the pump before first use. You may also need to prime the pump if it has not been used for some time. Be sure you know when you need to prime the pump and how to do it. Talk with the doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.
- Hold upright to use. Do not turn upside down.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Put on a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's 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 in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Protect from heat.
- Be sure you know how long you can store this drug before you need to throw it away.
- 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:

- Protect from heat and sunlight. Do not puncture or burn even if it seems empty.
- Store upright with the cap on.

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

2026-07-10

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.

Benzoyl Peroxide - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center