PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Levalbuterol

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

Xopenex Concentrate [DSC]; Xopenex HFA; Xopenex [DSC]

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to open the airways in lung diseases where spasm may cause breathing problems.

## 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 is using another drug like this one. If you are not sure, ask your child's doctor or pharmacist.
- If your child is taking inhaled epinephrine.

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.
- Do not run out of this drug.
- Do not give more of this drug or have your child use it more often than you were told by the doctor. Deaths have happened when too much of this drug was taken. Talk with the doctor.
- It is important that your child has enough of this drug to use for sudden or severe breathing problems. Be sure to get a refill before your child runs out.
- Call the doctor right away if your child's normal dose does not work well, if your child's signs get worse, or if your child needs to use this drug more often than normal.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your child's blood sugar closely.

## 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.

## Liquid for breathing in:

- If the patient is a child younger than 6 years of age, talk with the doctor. This drug has not been shown to be safe and effective in children younger than 6 years of age.

## Inhaler:

- If the patient is a child younger than 4 years of age, talk with the doctor. This drug has not been shown to be safe and effective in children younger than 4 years of age.

## 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.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Chest pain or pressure, a fast heartbeat, or an abnormal heartbeat.
- This drug may sometimes cause severe breathing problems. This may be life-threatening. When this happens with an inhaler or with liquid for breathing in, most of the time it happens right after a dose and after the first use of a new canister or vial of this drug. If your child has trouble breathing, breathing that is worse, wheezing, or coughing, get medical help right away.

## 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:

- Nervous and excitable.
- Dizziness or headache.
- Runny nose.
- Shakiness.

- Throat irritation.
- Throwing up.

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.

### Liquid for breathing in:

- For breathing in only as a liquid (solution) by a special machine (nebulizer) into the lungs.
- Only use the type of nebulizer that you have been told to use. If you are not sure what type of nebulizer to use, talk with the doctor.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- Some of these products must be mixed with saline before use. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to see if your child's product needs to be mixed.
- Do not mix other drugs in nebulizer.
- Keep out of your child's eyes.
- If your child is using more than 1 inhaled drug, ask your child's doctor which inhaled drug to give first.

### Inhaler:

- For breathing into the lungs.
- Shake well before use.
- Prepare the inhaler before first use or when the inhaler has not been used

for 3 days. Spray 4 test sprays into the air.

- Put the cap back on after your child is done using a dose.
- A spacer may be used with the inhaler for easy use.
- Follow how to clean carefully.
- Some inhalers have a dose counter to keep track of how many doses are left. If your inhaler has a dose counter, throw the inhaler away when the dose counter reaches "0."
- Keep out of your child's eyes.
- If your child is using more than 1 inhaled drug, ask your child's doctor which inhaled drug to give first.

## What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- If your child uses this drug on a regular basis, give 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 give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is given on an as needed basis. Do not give to your child more often than told by the doctor.

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

### All products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- 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.

### Liquid for breathing in:

- Protect from heat and light.
- Store unused containers in foil pouch until use.
- After opening the foil pouch, be sure you know how long the product is good and how to store it. Ask the doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

### Inhaler:

- Protect from light.
- Store with the mouthpiece down.
- Protect from heat or open flame. Do not puncture or burn even if it seems empty.

## 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

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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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