PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Metronidazole (Topical

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

MetroCream [DSC]; Metrogel [DSC]; MetroLotion [DSC]; Noritate; Nuvessa; Rosadan [DSC]; Vandazole

Brand Names: Canada

Metrogel; Nidagel; Noritate

What is this drug used for?

All skin products:

- It is used to treat some skin problems.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

All vaginal products:

- It is used to treat vaginal infections. If this drug has been given for some other reason, talk with the doctor for more information.

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 taken disulfiram within the past 2 weeks.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Your child may need to avoid breast-feeding a baby.

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.
- Alcohol interacts with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol or take products that have alcohol in them.
- If your child is taking a product that has propylene glycol in it, talk with your child's doctor.
- Metronidazole has been shown to cause cancer in mice and rats with long-term use. Talk with the doctor.
- The doctor has given you this drug for a certain health problem. Do not use this drug for other health problems.

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

- Tell the doctor if your child is pregnant or becomes pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks of your child using this drug while pregnant.

All vaginal products:

- Do not let your child douche or use other vaginal products like tampons while she is using this drug. Your child may need to avoid these things for some time after the last dose. If you have questions, talk with your child's doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Be sure the doctor and lab workers know your child uses this drug.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- Vaginal sex must be avoided while using this drug.

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:

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.
- Irritation where this drug was used.
- Nervous system problems have happened with the oral and injection forms of this drug. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal; change in balance or eyesight; dizziness or passing out; headache; not able to sleep; seizures; or trouble speaking. Call your child's doctor right away if your child feels confused, depressed, irritable, tired, or weak.

All vaginal products:

- Vaginal discharge.

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 skin products:

- Dry skin.
- Scaling.
- Itching.
- Burning or stinging.

All vaginal products:

- Headache.
- Stomach pain.

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:

- Wash your hands before and after use.
- 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.

All skin 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).
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- Makeup may be used after the skin has dried.
- Talk with your child's doctor before you use other drugs or products on your child's skin. This includes soaps.

All vaginal products:

- Do not give this drug by mouth. For vaginal use only. Keep out of your child's mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Some products are to be used at bedtime. For some products it does not matter. Check with the pharmacist about how to use this drug.
- Do not give to your child longer than you have been told. A second infection may happen.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- 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.

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.

All vaginal products:

- Protect from heat.
- Protect from cold.

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 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

2026-07-22

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.

Metronidazole (Topical - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center