PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Norgestrel

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

Opill

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to prevent pregnancy. If your child has been given this drug 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 ever had breast cancer or another cancer where hormones make it grow.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Liver disease or liver tumors.
- If your child has unexplained vaginal bleeding.
- If your child is taking birth control pills or some other hormone-based birth control.
- If your child has taken ulipristal (an emergency contraceptive) in the last 5 days.
- If your child is a male. This drug is not approved for use in males.

### If your child is pregnant:

- Do not give this drug to your child during pregnancy.

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.
- This drug does not prevent pregnancy if taken after unprotected sex. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your child's blood sugar closely.
- Be sure your child has regular breast exams and gynecology check-ups. Your child will also need to do breast self-exams as the doctor has told you.
- Certain drugs, herbal products, or health problems may cause hormone-based birth control to not work as well. Be sure the doctor knows about all of your child's drugs and health problems. You will need to see if your child also needs to use a non-hormone form of birth control like condoms.
- If your child is allergic to tartrazine (FD&C Yellow No. 5), talk with your child's doctor. Some products have tartrazine.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Ovarian cysts may rarely happen. Most of the time, these go back to normal in 2 to 3 months. Sometimes, ovarian cysts can cause pain and the need for surgery. Talk with the doctor.

- Menstrual periods may stop in some people taking this drug. Tell the doctor if your child does not have a menstrual period for 2 months after having normal periods.

### If your child is or may be sexually active:

- This drug does not stop the spread of diseases like HIV or hepatitis that are passed through having sex. Be sure your child does not have any kind of sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom.
- If your child gets pregnant while taking this drug, the chance of pregnancy outside of the uterus (ectopic pregnancy) may be raised.
- If your child has any signs of pregnancy or a positive pregnancy test, call the doctor right away.

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

- Tell the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about any risks to 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.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Very bad headache.

- Sudden or severe long-lasting stomach pain (mostly on one side).
- Spotting or vaginal bleeding that is very bad or does not go away.
- A lump in the breast, breast pain or soreness, or nipple 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:

- Period (menstrual) changes. These include spotting or bleeding between cycles.
- Headache.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Upset stomach.
- Increased appetite.
- Stomach pain or cramps.
- Bloating.
- Vaginal discharge.
- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Back pain.
- Pimples (acne).

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.

- Be sure you know when your child needs to start taking this drug. If you are not sure when, talk with your child's doctor.
- After starting this drug, your child may need to use a non-hormone type of birth control like condoms to prevent pregnancy for some time. Have your child follow what the doctor has told you about using a non-hormone type of birth control.
- Give this drug at the same time of day.
- Do not skip doses, even if your child does not have sex or does not have sex very often.
- If your child misses 2 periods in a row, have your child take a pregnancy test before starting a new dosing cycle.
- If your child throws up or has diarrhea, this drug may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. If this happens within 3 to 4 hours after your child takes an active tablet, give another tablet. If it goes on for more than 1 day, your child must use an extra form of birth control and you must call the doctor. Call the doctor if your child throws up or has diarrhea and you are not sure what to do.

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

- If a dose is missed, check the package insert or call the doctor to find out what to do. If using this drug to prevent pregnancy, a non-hormone form of birth control like condoms may need to be used for some time to prevent pregnancy.

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

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- 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

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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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