

Isotretinoin (Accutane) Treatment

What is Isotretinoin?

Isotretinoin (*pronounced eye-so-tret-in-oy-n*) is a strong medication derived from vitamin A, primarily prescribed for severe, treatment-resistant acne such as nodular or cystic types.

How Does Isotretinoin Work?

Isotretinoin reduces oil in the skin, helps keep pores clear, and calms inflammation. Only a dermatologist can prescribe it, and regular check-ups are needed to manage side effects. Even though it's strong, isotretinoin is one of the best long-term treatments for stubborn acne.

Are There Any Side Effects?

Common Side Effects:

- Acne flare-up early in treatment
- Dry lips, skin, eyes or nosebleeds
- Joint pain
- Tiredness
- Sun sensitivity and facial flushing
- Fragile skin (avoid waxing, peels or laser).

Please see your doctor if you experience any of the following:

Serious Side Effects:

- Severe headache with vision changes
- Mood changes/depression
- Severe muscle or joint pain
- Night blindness
- Changes in liver function or blood fats (monitored by blood tests)
- Irregular menstruation
- Rare allergic reactions.

Important Reminders:

Follow all medical advice directed by the Dermatology team

Book an appointment to see your doctor in 4 months for blood tests and review

Use contraception strictly if applicable

Contact your doctor if any concerns



Important Information to Know Before Starting Isotretinoin (Accutane)

- **Stop** doxycycline, minocycline and any prescription acne creams (topical retinoid) or washes
- If advised, get a **fasting blood test** (no food or drink except water for 8 hours) before starting. Females will need repeat negative pregnancy blood test with each script renewal
- **Females must use DOUBLE contraception during treatment and for 3 months after** due to serious birth defect risks
- If you are considering joining the Army or Navy, please consult with the military medical professionals before starting Isotretinoin as this medication may affect eligibility or deployment
- **You cannot donate blood while on this medication or for one month after ceasing the medication.**

Your Treatment Plan

Duration: 8–18 months average

Track your tablets to calculate your total dose

Month 1

Take **ONE tablet** on **Monday, Wednesday** and **Friday** with a meal.

Note: acne may worsen initially.

Month 2-3

If you are feeling well on the current dose, you can increase to **ONE tablet every day.**

Month 4

If you are well and directed by your doctor, take **another** tablet on **Monday, Wednesday** and **Friday.**

Month 5

If you are well and directed by your doctor you can **take two tablets every day.**

For antibiotics: Cephalexin OR erythromycin 250mg twice a day for 6 weeks

Please see your doctor:

If prescribed the below medications follow directions given by your doctor:

Prednisolone:

Follow doctor's dose for first few weeks.

Cephalexin (Keflex):

One tablet twice daily for six weeks if directed.

Stop taking Isotretinoin and contact your doctor if:

- **You are pregnant or suspect pregnancy**
- **Experiencing severe mood changes or depression**
- **Having visual changes or headaches**
- **Any serious side effects (listed on page 1).**

Skincare Tips

Sunscreen

Isotretinoin makes your skin more sensitive to the sun and increases the risk of sunburn.

La Roche Posay, Sunsense, Nivea or Cancer Council.

Lips

Use lip balm.

Dermal Therapy, La Roche-Posay Cicaplast or Paw Paw ointment.

Cleanser

Use gentle cleansers.

La Roche-Posay Toleriane, Effaclar H, CeraVe or Cetaphil.

Moisturiser

Use non-comedogenic moisturisers twice a day.

Cetaphil or CeraVe.

Skin will be dry. Avoid retinol products.

For questions or further information contact the Dermatology team:

**Dermatology Department
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Monday to Friday 08:00-4:30pm

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