

# ERYTHROMYCIN THERAPY

## **What Is Erythromycin?**

Erythromycin is an antibiotic used to treat infections. It is also used by dermatologists to treat certain skin conditions that are not caused by infections (for example: acne).

## **Do I take it with or without food?**

It should be taken one hour before meals for optimum absorption into your system.

## **Are there any side effects?**

Sometimes abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea may occur. These will frequently resolve even with continued use of Erythromycin. Some patients with impaired liver function should not take Erythromycin.

During prolonged therapy (as used for acne), some patients develop vaginal yeast (candida) infections. This may cause vaginal itching or discharge. If this occurs, use one of the over-the-counter anti-yeast creams or tablets.

Like all medications, you could be allergic to Erythromycin. If you develop a rash while taking Erythromycin, discontinue use and call your doctor.

If these problems should persist and become intolerable, you should do the following:

- **If you were prescribed Erythromycin for treatment of an infection (not acne), call your doctor.**
- **If you are taking Erythromycin for acne**, discontinue use until the symptoms disappear. Then start again at half the dose you were taking before. If problems occur at this dose, discontinue the medication and see your doctor for alternative gradually attempt to increase the dose again to determine the maximum dose you can comfortably take. Continue this dose until your next visit to the doctor. Do not take more than the prescribed dose. If diarrhea persists after stopping the medication or is ever severe, contact your doctor.

## **Is it safe to take Erythromycin during pregnancy?**

Short term use of Erythromycin is considered safe. However, the safety of long-term use during pregnancy is unknown and should thus be avoided when possible.

## **Tell your dermatologist if you are taking any of the following medications:**

- Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Theophylline or aminophylline-containing asthma medications (e.g. Primatene Tablets, Slo-Phyllin, Theo-Dur)
- Ergot migraine medicines (Ergotamine, Cafergot, Wigraine Bellergal-S)
- Cyclosporine (Sandimmune)
- Digoxin
- Triazolam (Halcion)
- Oral anticoagulants (e.g. Warfarin, Dicumarol, Coumadin)
- Antihistamines Seldane, Hismanol, Tacrolimus, Hexobarbital, Gromocriptive, Valproate

## **How to Reduce Erythromycin Dosage (for acne and rosacea patients)**

While Erythromycin is generally a safe medication for long-term use, it is preferable to use as little as possible for as short a time as possible. If appropriate in your situation, your doctor will suggest a gradual reduction in your dosage. Since there may be a lag time of several weeks between taking the medicine and

its effect on the skin, you should allow at least 4 to 6 weeks between each reduction in dose. Keep reducing your dosage until you start to break out-the resume taking the smallest dose that previously controlled your eruption. Your doctor will help determine a reduction schedule during follow-up visits.

Using medications applied to the skin (such as antibiotic gels or solutions, benzoyl peroxide gels, or Retin-A) may allow you to discontinue Erythromycin entirely. It is generally preferable not to rely exclusively on medications taken by mouth for long-term therapy since they have more side effects than do medications applied to the skin.