

PYRIMETHAMINE

Other NAMES: Daraprim®

WHY is this drug prescribed?

Pyrimethamine is an antiparasitic agent that is used to treat and prevent a variety of infections, including Toxoplasmosis, an infection of the brain. It can also be used to prevent and treat certain types of malaria.

HOW should this drug be taken?

Pyrimethamine is available as 25 mg white tablets.

This drug is used together with other drugs such as sulfadiazine (Microsulfon®) or clindamycin (Dalacin® C) in the treatment and prevention of recurrences of **toxoplasmosis**. Pyrimethamine is also usually given together with folic acid (Leucovorin®) to counteract the effects of pyrimethamine on the blood.

Pyrimethamine can sometimes be given for the prevention of Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, in combination with dapsone (Avlosulfon®).

The treatment dose of pyrimethamine in adults is 200 mg on the first day, then followed by 50 to 100 mg daily for 6 weeks.

The preventative or suppressive dose of pyrimethamine is usually 25 to 75 mg daily.

Your dosage is:

25 mg tablet:

Day 1:
____ tablets (____ mg) once daily

afterwards:

____ tablets (____ mg) once daily

Pyrimethamine can be taken with or without food.

What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of pyrimethamine, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is time for your next dose, do not double the dose, just carry on with your regular schedule.

What ADVERSE EFFECTS can this drug cause? What should you do about them?

Allergic reactions with **skin rash and itching** can occur. If this happens, call your doctor.

Pyrimethamine can cause a decrease in certain types of blood counts. **Anemia** (a reduced number of red blood cells that can make you feel tired or short of breath), **leucopenia** (a decrease in the number of white blood cells so that you have a higher risk of bacterial infection), or thrombocytopenia (a decrease in the number of platelets that can increase your risk of bleeding or bruising) may occur.

Blood tests will be done regularly to check for any changes in these values. To prevent these adverse effects you will be asked to take folic acid (Leucovorin®). Inform your doctor if you notice any symptoms such as fever, chills, shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, fatigue, bleeding or bruising.

Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea can also occur. If these effects do happen, take the drug with food. If they remain bothersome, call your doctor or pharmacy.

Insomnia, headache, dryness of mouth or throat, and mouth ulcers are adverse events that are rarely seen.

It is important that you keep your doctor appointments and come for your laboratory tests so that your progress can be followed.

What other PRECAUTIONS should you follow while using this drug?

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of pyrimethamine. Also, pyrimethamine might influence the effect of other drugs you are taking. Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

In particular, you could be at increased risk of adverse events if you are taking the following drugs:

- Anti-cancer drugs: chemotherapy
- Lorazepam (Ativan®)
- Quinine
- Trimethoprim (Proloprim®)
- Trimethoprim + Sulfamethoxazole (Bactrim®, Septra®)
- Warfarin (Coumadin®)
- Zidovudine (Retrovir®)

Also, antacids (Maalox®, Tums®, etc) and agents containing kaolin (Donnagel®) can decrease the absorption of pyrimethamine. Avoid using these agents or take them at least 2 hours after the pyrimethamine dose.

Inform your doctor if you have a history of epilepsy (convulsions), liver or kidney disease.

Before starting this drug, tell your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Use of pyrimethamine during pregnancy needs to be discussed with your doctor. Breastfeeding is NOT recommended while you are taking pyrimethamine.

How should this drug be STORED?

Pyrimethamine should be stored in a cool (15-30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. Ensure that the drug has not expired by checking the expiry date

(“EXP”) shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store in your bathroom or kitchen, as heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

If you have any questions or concerns about this drug or if you are experiencing adverse effects, please discuss them with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.

Write questions or concerns down to ensure they are addressed.

The following pharmacist is available to answer questions:

Pharmacist: _____

Telephone: _____

Reference: Product Monograph Daraprim® (pyrimethamine). St-Laurent, Qc, Canada: GlaxoSmithKline, 2002. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2003. Reviewed 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: www.hivclinic.ca

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MEDICATION

FACT SHEET