

## CO-TRIMOXAZOLE

**Other NAMES:** Septra®, Bactrim®, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP/SMX)

**Inform your doctor and pharmacist if you have ever had a reaction to a sulfa drug.**

### WHY is this drug prescribed?

Co-trimoxazole is a combination of two antibiotics used to prevent or treat *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP). It is also used to prevent other infections such as toxoplasmosis (severe brain infection).

### HOW should this drug be taken?

Co-trimoxazole is available as “single strength” tablets, which are round white circles, and as “double strength” tablets, which are larger, white football-shaped tablets. Be sure you have the correct type of tablets for your dose. If you have difficulty swallowing tablets, a liquid preparation is available.

To prevent PCP and toxoplasmosis, the usual dosage is 1 single-strength or 1 double-strength tablet once a day. It can also be given only three days a week.

To treat PCP, co-trimoxazole can be given by mouth 3 or 4 times a day or may be given by intravenous injections (in more severe cases).

You should drink a full glass of water with your dose of co-trimoxazole. Co-trimoxazole can be taken with food or on an empty stomach. If it upsets your stomach, take it with food.

Your dosage is:

single- strength tablet (80mg TMP/400mg SMX)  
double-strength tablet (160mg TMP / 800mg SMX)

\_\_\_tablets(\_\_\_mg TMP) \_\_\_times a day  
\_\_\_days a week

or

8 mg / mL TMP + 40 mg / mL SMX  
oral suspension

\_\_\_mL (\_\_\_mg TMP) \_\_\_times a day  
\_\_\_days a week

### Shake suspension well

### What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of co-trimoxazole, 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.

### Why should you not forget to take this drug?

If you miss doses of co-trimoxazole, you are increasing your risk of catching severe infections such as PCP and toxoplasmosis. If you are presently taking co-trimoxazole to treat an active PCP infection, not completing your full treatment can cause your infection to worsen. In such a situation, you may need to take other drugs. Therefore, it is extremely important that you take co-trimoxazole for the entire duration of the treatment.

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

Allergies to co-trimoxazole are very common in people infected with HIV. The allergy is characterized by symptoms such as **fever with**

**or without a skin rash and itchiness.** If this occurs, call your doctor immediately. If you cannot tolerate co-trimoxazole, other drugs can be used to prevent PCP and toxoplasmosis or to treat PCP. Alternatively, your doctor may decide to retry co-trimoxazole but by increasing the dose very slowly (desensitization).

**Decreases in white blood cells** (needed to help fight infection), **red blood cells** (needed to help carry oxygen around your body), **and platelets** (needed to help your blood clot) can also occur. Usually, they do not decrease enough to stop your therapy. It is important to keep your appointments for regular blood work so that any changes can be monitored. Please inform your doctor if you develop symptoms such as fever, chills, shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, fatigue, bleeding or bruising.

**Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, or diarrhea** are not common. If these effects do happen, take the drug with food. If they remain bothersome, call your doctor or pharmacist.

Co-trimoxazole may cause **increases in liver enzymes.** This will be monitored when you come for your laboratory tests.

**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?

Before starting co-trimoxazole, notify your doctor and pharmacist if you have ever had an allergic reaction to co-trimoxazole or to another sulfa drug. Also, inform your doctor if you have kidney or liver problems.

Co-trimoxazole can make your skin more sensitive to the sun or sunlamps. Therefore, wear protective clothing and use a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15 whenever you are exposed to the sun. You should also avoid sunlamps. Ask your pharmacist to help select a sunscreen that protects against drug-sun reactions.

Co-trimoxazole may interfere with many drugs. 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, please notify your doctor and pharmacist if you are taking the following drugs:

- Cyclosporine(Neoral®, Sandimmune®)
- Digoxin (Lanoxin®)
- Methotrexate
- Phenytoin (Dilantin™)
- Pyrimethamine (Daraprim®)
- Warfarin (Coumadin®)
- Zidovudine (Retrovir®)

The safety of co-trimoxazole during pregnancy and breastfeeding has not yet been established. Please discuss this with your doctor if this is a concern. Breastfeeding is NOT recommended if you have HIV as you can transmit the virus to your baby through your breast milk.

#### **How should this drug be STORED?**

Co-trimoxazole tablets and oral suspension 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 Septra® (trimethoprim - sulfamethoxazole). Saint-Laurent, QC, Canada: GlaxoSmithKline, 2002. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2003.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: [www.hivclinic.ca](http://www.hivclinic.ca)

# ***COTRIMOXAZOLE***

***(TRIMETHOPRIM-  
SULFAMETHOXAZOLE)***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***