

METRONIDAZOLE

Other NAMES: Flagyl®

WHY is this drug prescribed?

Metronidazole is a drug used to treat infections caused by parasites (amoeba) and anaerobe bacteria. It can be given to treat diarrhea caused by *Entamoeba histolytica*, *Giardia lamblia*, or *Clostridium difficile*. It can also be used to treat vaginal infections or various types of bacterial infections.

HOW should this drug be taken?

Metronidazole is available as 250 mg tablets and 500 mg capsules. It is also available as vaginal creams and inserts as well as a cream to apply on the skin. If needed, metronidazole can also be given intravenously (by the veins).

The recommended dose of metronidazole will vary depending on the type of infection that is being treated.

Metronidazole can be taken with or without food. **You should NOT take any alcohol during your treatment and for at least 24 hours following the end of the treatment.**

Your dosage is:

250 mg tablet
500 mg capsule

___tablets or capsules (___mg) by mouth
___times a day for ___days

or

500 mg vaginal insert
vaginal cream (applicator included)

___insert / applicatorful in the vagina
___times a day for ___days

What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of metronidazole, 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 metronidazole, the infection will continue and possibly worsen. Therefore, it is extremely important that you take metronidazole for the entire duration of the treatment.

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

Adverse effects seen on occasion with metronidazole are **nausea, vomiting, upset stomach, loss of appetite, dry mouth, and metallic taste**. Metronidazole can also cause **headache, dizziness, drowsiness, and confusion**. Rarely it can cause **hallucinations, convulsions and a tingling or numbness feeling in the hands, legs and feet** (peripheral neuropathy). If these effects appear and are bothersome, call your doctor or pharmacist.

Rarely, an **allergic reaction** with a skin rash, hives and fever may occur. Please consult a doctor immediately if this happens.

Metronidazole may cause **decreases in white blood cells** (needed to help fight infection) as well as **increases in liver enzymes** (sign of liver damage). Blood tests should be done regularly to check if there are any changes in these values. Also, your doctor will check your pancreas function. Please inform your doctor if you develop symptoms such as fever, chills, sore throat, fatigue, yellow skin and eyes, severe abdominal pain and vomiting.

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 metronidazole, please inform your doctor if you have a history of problems with your liver, blood or nervous system (convulsions). Also, inform your doctor if you are allergic to metronidazole. You should NOT use metronidazole if you have a known allergy to this drug.

You should NOT drink any alcohol while you are taking metronidazole and for at least 24 hours after the end of the treatment. Drinking alcohol will give you flushing. This is characterized by hot flashes, redness of the face and chest, nausea, headaches and a general feeling of being unwell.

As this drug may cause some people to become dizzy, drowsy or less alert than normal, you should NOT drive, use machinery or do anything else that could be dangerous if you are dizzy or are not alert.

Metronidazole can interfere with other 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, you should NOT take metronidazole if you are taking disulfiram (Antabuse®).

Also, inform your doctor and pharmacist if you are taking the following drugs:

- 5-fluorouracil
- lithium (Carbolith™, Lithane™, Duralith®)
- phenobarbital
- phenytoin (Dilantin™)
- warfarin (Coumadin®)

Metronidazole should NOT be used during pregnancy, especially during the first trimester. Please inform your doctor if you are pregnant. The potential benefits will need to be compared to the potential risks for the baby. You should NOT breastfeed while taking metronidazole.

When you have diarrhea, it is crucial to always drink appropriate amounts of fluids in order to avoid dehydration. If you have minor diarrhea (less than 4 stools daily) drinking caffeine-free soft drinks, juices or sport rehydration drinks can be sufficient. If the diarrhea is more severe, specially formulated rehydration drinks should be taken.

These products can be obtained in pharmacies (for example, Pedialyte® or Gastrolyte®). These drinks contain sugar as well as other substances that you may lose in high amounts because of the diarrhea (sodium, potassium). Your pharmacist can tell you how much of these drinks you need to take to avoid dehydration.

You should consult a doctor if you have one or more symptoms associated with dehydration. These are dry mouth, excessive thirst, wrinkled skin, little or no urination, dizziness and lightheadedness.

How should this drug be STORED?

Metronidazole should be stored in a cool (15-25°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 Flagyl® (metronidazole); Laval, Qc, Canada: Sanofi Aventis Pharma ., 2007. 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