

MedHub Patient Information Leaflet

Isotretinoin for Acne



Why you are receiving this leaflet:

Isotretinoin is a very effective medicine for severe acne, but it must be used safely. Some rare but serious side effects can affect mood, sexual function, or pregnancy outcomes. Please read carefully and keep this leaflet for reference.

! Urgent Help

- **If you ever feel unable to keep yourself safe or are in crisis, call 999.**
- **For urgent mental health support: Call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option (available 24/7 in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, and Suffolk).**
- **Samaritans (24/7 listening support): Call 116 123 or visit www.samaritans.org**

Mental Health

Some people experience changes in mood such as sadness, anxiety, irritability, or thoughts of self-harm while taking isotretinoin — occasionally even after stopping it.

Please contact your clinic team or GP straight away if you notice any change in mood, sleep, or behaviour.

We will ask about your mental health at every review.

Support is always available — please reach out early.

Pregnancy Prevention (PPP)

Isotretinoin causes severe birth defects and must not be taken in pregnancy.

If you could become pregnant, you will be enrolled in the Pregnancy Prevention Programme (PPP), which includes:

- Using two reliable forms of contraception for at least one month before starting.
- Monthly pregnancy testing during treatment.
- One final pregnancy test one month after stopping.
- Immediate reporting of any pregnancy while taking or within one month of finishing isotretinoin.

Local contraception and sexual health services:

- iCaSH Cambridgeshire: 0300 300 3030
- iCaSH Suffolk: 0300 303 9982
- (These services offer contraception, emergency contraception, and sexual health support.)

Sexual Health

A small number of people have reported changes in sexual function, such as reduced libido or genital sensitivity. These may occur during or after treatment. Please tell your prescriber if you notice any changes.

Support and advice are available via your clinic, GP, or iCaSH service.

Blood Donation

Do not donate blood:

- During treatment, or
- For at least 1 month after your last capsule.

This prevents any risk to a pregnant blood recipient.

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Prescriptions and Collection

If you are a woman of childbearing potential:

- Your isotretinoin prescription is valid for only 7 days from the date it is issued.
- You must collect and start your medicine within 7 days of your appointment.
- Each supply covers a maximum of 30 days of treatment.
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Your Monitoring Plan

- Blood tests: We check liver function, lipids, and blood count before starting, then at 1 month and at least every 3 months.
- Mental health: Checked at every review.
- Sexual function: Asked about regularly.
- Contraception: Reviewed at every visit if applicable.
- Follow-ups: Usually every 4–6 weeks.

Your appointments are as follows:

Baseline blood test: ____/____/____

Initial Consultation: ____/____/____

Treatment Initiated: ____/____/____

4 week blood test: ____/____/____

1 month review appointment: ____/____/____

2 month review appointment: ____/____/____

3 month review appointment: ____/____/____

16 week blood test: ____/____/____

4 month review appointment: ____/____/____

You may end your treatment here and have a 6 month follow-up: ____/____/____

OR

You may continue your treatment.....

5 month review appointment: ____/____/____

6 month review appointment: ____/____/____

12 month follow-up appointment: ____/____/____

Side-Effect Reporting

Please tell us about any new symptoms. You can also report side effects directly to the MHRA Yellow Card Scheme at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk.

This helps keep all patients safe.

Further Information

- British Association of Dermatologists: www.bad.org.uk → Isotretinoin Patient Guide
- NHS: www.nhs.uk/medicines/isotretinoin