



[Home](#)

2. Permethrin

Permethrin topical

Generic name: permethrin topical [*per-METH-rin*]

Brand names: [Acticin](#), [Lice Bedding Spray](#), Nix Complete Lice Treatment, [Nix Complete Lice Treatment System](#), [Nix Cream Rinse](#), ... [show all 21 brands](#)

Dosage forms: topical cream (5%), topical kit (1%), topical lotion (1%), topical spray (0.25%; 0.5%)

Drug class: [Topical anti-infectives](#)



[Medically reviewed](#) by Drugs.com on Aug 9, 2023. Written by [Cerner Multum](#).

[Uses](#) [Side effects](#) [Warnings](#) [Before taking](#) [Dosage](#) [Interactions](#) [FAQ](#)

What is permethrin topical?

Permethrin is an anti-parasite medication.

Permethrin topical (for the skin) is used to treat [head lice](#) and [scabies](#).

Permethrin topical may also be used for other purposes not listed in this medication guide.

Permethrin topical side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction:** hives; difficult breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Call your doctor at once if you have severe burning, stinging, redness, or swelling after applying permethrin topical.

Common side effects of permethrin topical may include:

- mild burning, stinging, [itching](#) or mild [rash](#);
- numbness or tingling where the medicine was applied;
- [headache](#), dizziness;
- [fever](#); or
- stomach pain, [nausea](#), [vomiting](#), [diarrhea](#).

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.



[Permethrin topical side effects](#) (more detail)

Related/similar drugs

Soolantra

Soolantra (ivermectin) is used to treat rosacea. Includes Soolantra side effects, interactions and ...

Reviews & ratings

7.7 / 10

[299 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

FEATURED

Omvox

Omvox is used to treat moderate to severe ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease in adults. This ...

Reviews & ratings

[1 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Natroba

Natroba (spinosad) is an anti-parasite medication used to treat head lice. Includes Natroba side ...

Reviews & ratings

[5 Reviews](#)

[View more](#)

Warnings

Follow all directions on your medicine label and package. Tell each of your healthcare providers about all your medical conditions, allergies, and all medicines you use.

Before taking this medicine

You should not use permethrin topical if you are allergic to permethrin or to chrysanthemums.

Ask a doctor or pharmacist if it is safe for you to use this medicine if you have other medical conditions.

Permethrin topical is not expected to be harmful to an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant.

It is not known whether permethrin topical passes into breast milk or if it could harm a nursing baby. You should not breast-feed while using this medicine.

Permethrin topical should not be used on a child younger than 2 months old.

How should I use permethrin topical?

Use exactly as directed on the label, or as prescribed by your doctor. Do not use in larger or smaller amounts or for longer than recommended.

You may have a temporary increase in itching, swelling, or redness of treated skin when you first start using permethrin topical.

Do not take by mouth. This medicine is for use only on the skin. Do not apply to open cuts or wounds. **If the medicine gets in your eyes or mouth, rinse with water.** Use the surface spray only on household surfaces and not on your skin.

You may need to shake the medicine before each use. Follow the directions on the medicine label.

To treat scabies:

- Clean and dry the skin. Apply a thin layer of this medicine to all body parts from the neck down to the soles of the feet. Rub in completely. Leave the medicine on your skin for 8 to 14 hours, then wash it off completely.
- When using permethrin topical on an infant, also apply the medicine to the scalp, temples, and forehead. Avoid applying near the eyes, nose, mouth, or genitals.
- If your condition does not clear up within 14 days, apply permethrin topical again.

To treat head lice:

- Wash your hair using shampoo only (no conditioner or 2-in-1 shampoo). Rinse thoroughly and towel dry the hair, leaving it damp.
- Protect your eyes with a towel or washcloth. Apply the medicine to completely saturate all hair, and leave it in for 10 minutes. Then rinse with warm water.
- You may also use a nit comb to remove lice eggs from the hair. Your hair should be slightly damp while using a nit comb. Work on only one section of hair at a time, combing through 1 to 2-inch strands from the scalp to the ends.
- Rinse the nit comb often during use. Place removed [nits](#) into a sealed plastic bag and throw it into the trash.
- Check the scalp again daily to make sure all nits have been removed.
- If you still see lice 7 days after your first treatment, use a second application.

To treat pubic lice (crabs):

- All sexual partners should be treated.
- Wash and dry the treatment area. Apply permethrin topical to all pubic hair and any surrounding hairs on the thighs and around the anus (avoid areas inside the rectum or vagina).
- Leave the medicine on for 10 minutes. Then work into a lather and rinse thoroughly with warm water.
- You may also use a nit comb to remove lice eggs from pubic hair (hair should be slightly damp).

To prevent reinfection, wash all clothing, hats, bed clothes, bed linens, and towels in hot water and dry in high heat. Dry-clean any non-washable clothing. Soak all hair brushes, combs, and hair accessories in hot water for at least 10 minutes.

Use **permethrin surface spray** to disinfect non-washable items such as:

- furniture;
- mattresses and pillows;
- stuffed toys;
- hats, gloves, and scarves;
- headphones or headbands;
- the inside of a bike helmet; or
- seats and carpets inside your car.

Stuffed toys or pillows that cannot be washed should be sealed in air-tight plastic bags for 4 weeks. After removing from the bag, vigorously shake the item outdoors.

Vacuum all rugs, carpets, and car seats. Then throw away the vacuum cleaner bag.

For the most complete treatment of lice or scabies, you must treat your environment (clothing, bedding, etc) at the same time you treat your hair and/or body.

Store permethrin topical at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

Permethrin topical dosing information

Usual Adult Dose for Scabies:

Permethrin topical 5% cream:

Thoroughly massage into the skin from the neck to the soles of the feet. The cream should be removed by washing (shower or bath) after 8 to 14 hours.

Usual Adult Dose for Lice:

Permethrin topical 1% kit:

Apply lotion/creme rinse to shampooed and towel-dried hair until hair and scalp are saturated (especially behind the ears and on the nape of the neck). Leave on hair for 10 minutes and rinse with water. Use comb and/or gloves provided to remove remaining nits.

Permethrin topical 1% solution:

Apply to shampooed and towel-dried hair until hair and scalp are saturated (especially behind the ears and on the nape of the neck). Leave on hair for 10 minutes and rinse with water.

Usual Pediatric Dose for Scabies:

Permethrin topical 5% cream

Infants: Thoroughly massage along the hairline, neck, temple, and forehead. The cream should be removed by washing after 8 to 14 hours.

Usual Pediatric Dose for Lice:

Permethrin topical 1% kit:

2 months or older: Apply lotion/creme rinse to shampooed and towel-dried hair until hair and scalp are saturated (especially behind the ears and on the nape of the neck). Leave on hair for 10 minutes and rinse with water. Use comb and/or gloves provided to remove remaining nits.

 [Detailed Permethrin topical dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Since permethrin topical is usually needed only once, you are not likely to be on a dosing schedule. Wait at least 7 days before using a second application.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 if you think you have used too much, or if anyone has accidentally swallowed the medication.

What should I avoid while using permethrin topical?

Rinse with water if permethrin topical gets in your eyes.

Lice and scabies infections are highly contagious. Avoid sexual or intimate contact with others until your lice or scabies [infection](#) has cleared up. Avoid sharing hair brushes, combs, hair accessories, hats, clothing, bed linens, and other articles of personal use.

Avoid using other medications on the areas you treat with permethrin topical, unless your doctor tells you to.

What other drugs will affect permethrin topical?

It is not likely that other drugs you take orally or inject will have an effect on topically applied permethrin topical. But many drugs can interact with each other. Tell each of your health care providers about all medicines you use, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, [vitamins](#), and [herbal products](#).

Does permethrin topical interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

+

Add

Frequently asked questions

- [Can you use Nix \(permethrin\) lice shampoo on your body as a lotion to kill scabies?](#)

More about permethrin topical

- [Compare alternatives](#)
- [Pricing & coupons](#)
- [Reviews \(29\)](#)
- [Side effects](#)
- [Dosage information](#)
- [During pregnancy](#)
- [Support group](#)
- [Drug class: topical anti-infectives](#)
- [Breastfeeding](#)

Patient resources

- [Permethrin advanced reading](#)
- [Permethrin Cream](#)
- [Permethrin Cream Rinse and Lotion](#)

Other brands

[Elimite](#), [Nix](#), [Acticin](#), [Lice Bedding Spray](#), ... +4 more

Professional resources

- [Permethrin monograph](#)
- [Permethrin \(FDA\)](#)

Other brands

[Elimite](#), [Nix](#)

Related treatment guides

- [Scabies](#)
- [Head Lice](#)
- [Lice](#)

Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use this medication only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

[Medical Disclaimer](#)

Copyright 1996-2025 Cerner Multum, Inc. Version: 9.01.

DRUG STATUS

Availability	
	Rx and/or OTC
Pregnancy & Lactation	
	Risk data available
CSA Schedule*	
N/A	Not a controlled drug
Approval History	
	Drug history at FDA

User Reviews & Ratings

4.3 / 10

[29 Reviews](#)

Drugs.com Mobile App

Access drug & treatment information, identify pills, check interactions and set up personal medication records.



About

- [About Drugs.com](#)
- [Advertising policy](#)
- [Attribution & citations](#)

Terms & privacy

- [Terms of use](#)
- [Editorial policy](#)
- [Privacy policy](#)

Support

- [Help center](#)
- [Sitemap](#)
- [Contact us](#)





[Subscribe to our newsletter](#) for the latest medication news, new drug approvals and FDA alerts.

Drugs.com provides accurate and independent information on more than 24,000 prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines and natural products. This material is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Data sources include Micromedex (updated 7 Apr 2025), Cerner Multum™ (updated 13 Apr 2025), ASHP (updated 10 Apr 2025) and others.



Ad Choices
ADVERTISEMENT



Copyright © 2000-2025 Drugs.com. All rights reserved.