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2. Ephedrine

Ephedrine

Generic name: ephedrine capsules and tablets [*e-FED-rin*]

Drug classes: [Decongestants](#), [Vasopressors](#)

Medically reviewed by [Sanjai Sinha, MD](#). Last updated on Nov 13, 2024.

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What is ephedrine?

Ephedrine is used for temporary relief of shortness of breath, chest tightness, and wheezing due to bronchial asthma. Ephedrine may also be used for other conditions as determined by your doctor.

Ephedrine is a decongestant and bronchodilator. It works by reducing swelling and constricting blood vessels in the nasal passages and widening the lung airways, allowing you to breathe more easily.

Do not use ephedrine if:

- you are allergic to this medication.
- you do not have a diagnosis of asthma
- you have a diagnosis of asthma but use prescription asthma medications
- if you have ever been hospitalized for asthma
- you are taking a monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitor (eg, phenelzine) now or have taken an MAO inhibitor in the last 14 days. If you do not know if your prescription drug contains an MAO inhibitor, ask your health care provider before taking this product.
- you have high blood pressure, heart disease, an irregular heartbeat, thyroid disease, diabetes, or difficulty in urination due to enlargement of the prostate gland or other severe heart problems

Contact your doctor or health care provider before using ephedrine if any of these apply to you.

Before using ephedrine

Some medical conditions may interact with ephedrine. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have any medical conditions, especially if any of the following apply to you:

- if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding
- if you are taking any prescription or nonprescription medicine, herbal preparation, or dietary supplement

- if you have allergies to medicines, foods, or other substances
- if you have a history of heart problems, diabetes, glaucoma, an enlarged prostate or other prostate problems, adrenal gland problems, high blood pressure, seizures, stroke, blood vessel problems, an overactive thyroid, or severe asthma

Some medicines may interact with ephedrine. Tell your health care provider if you are taking any other medicines, especially any of the following:

- Beta-blockers (eg, propranolol), cocaine, indomethacin, methyldopa, MAO inhibitors (eg, phenelzine), linezolid, oxytocic medicines (eg, oxytocin), rauwolfia derivatives (eg, reserpine), or tricyclic antidepressants (eg, amitriptyline), or ergot alkaloids (eg, dihydroergotamine) because the actions and side effects of ephedrine may be increased
- Bromocriptine, catechol-O-methyltransferase (COMT) inhibitors (eg, entacapone), or digoxin because the actions and side effects of these medicines may be increased
- Guanadrel, guanethidine, mecamylamine, methyldopa, or reserpine because its effectiveness may be decreased by ephedrine

This may not be a complete list of all interactions that may occur. Ask your health care provider if ephedrine may interact with other medicines that you take. Check with your health care provider before you start, stop, or change the dose of any medicine.

 [Ephedrine pregnancy and breastfeeding warnings](#) (more detail)

How to use ephedrine

Use this medication as directed by your doctor. Check the label on the medicine for exact dosing instructions. Check the label on the medicine for exact dosing instructions.

- ephedrine may be taken with or without food. If stomach upset occurs, take with food to reduce stomach irritation.
- If you miss a dose of ephedrine and are taking it regularly, take it as soon as possible. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. Do not take 2 doses at once.

Ask your health care provider any questions you may have about how to use ephedrine.

 [Detailed Ephedrine dosage information](#)

Important safety information

- ephedrine may cause dizziness. Do not drive, operate machinery, or do anything else that could be dangerous until you know how you react to ephedrine. Using ephedrine alone, with certain other medicines, or with alcohol may lessen your ability to drive or perform other potentially dangerous tasks.
- If your symptoms do not improve within 7 days or if you develop a high fever, check with your doctor.
- If you have trouble sleeping, ask your pharmacist or doctor about the best time to take this medication.
- Do not take diet or appetite control medicines while you are taking ephedrine.
- Before you begin taking any new prescription or nonprescription medicine, read the ingredients to see if it also contains ephedrine. If it does or if you are uncertain, contact your doctor or pharmacist.

- Diabetes patients - ephedrine may affect your blood sugar. Check blood sugar levels closely and ask your doctor before adjusting the dose of your diabetes medicine.
- Use this medication with caution in the elderly because they may be more sensitive to its effects.
- Use ephedrine with extreme caution in children. Safety and effectiveness have not been confirmed.
- Pregnancy and breast-feeding: It is unknown if this medication can cause harm to the fetus. If you become pregnant while taking ephedrine, discuss with your doctor the benefits and risks of using ephedrine during pregnancy. Ephedrine is excreted in breast milk. If you are or will be breast-feeding while you are using ephedrine, check with your doctor or pharmacist to discuss the risks to your baby.

Possible side effects of ephedrine

All medicines may cause side effects, but many people have no, or minor, side effects. Check with your doctor if any of these most common side effects persist longer than one hours or become worse:

- Dizziness; headache; nausea; nervousness; tremor; loss of appetite; restlessness; sleeplessness; stomach irritation.

Seek medical attention right away if any of these severe side effects occur:

- Severe allergic reactions (rash; hives; difficulty breathing; tightness in the chest; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue); difficulty urinating.

This is not a complete list of all side effects that may occur.

 [Ephedrine side effects](#) (more detail)

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Proper storage of ephedrine

Store this medication at room temperature, between 59 and 77 degrees F (15 and 25 degrees C). Store away from heat, moisture, and light. Do not store in the bathroom. Keep ephedrine out of the reach of children and away from pets.

General information

- If you have any questions about ephedrine, please talk with your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- ephedrine is to be used only by the patient for whom it is prescribed. Do not share it with other people.

- If your symptoms do not improve or if they become worse, check with your doctor.

This information is a summary only. It does not contain all information about ephedrine. If you have questions about the medicine you are taking or would like more information, check with your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

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Further information

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

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	Risk data available	
CSA Schedule*		
N/A	Not a controlled drug	▼
Approval History		
	Drug history at FDA	▼
WADA Class		
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8.2 / 10

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