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2. Salicylic acid

Salicylic acid topical

Generic name: salicylic acid topical [*SAL-i-SIL-ik-AS-id-TOP-ik-al*]

Brand names: [Acnevir](#), CeraVe SA, Clean and Clear Blackhead Eraser Facial Scrub, [Compound W](#), Compound W One Step Plantar Pads, ... [show all 172 brands](#)

Dosage forms: topical bar (1%), topical cream (-; 3%; 6%), topical foam (6%), topical gel (17%; 2%; 3%; 6%), ... [show all 14 dosage forms](#)

Drug classes: [Topical acne agents](#), [Topical keratolytics](#)



[Medically reviewed](#) by Drugs.com on Jan 17, 2024. Written by [Cerner Multum](#).

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What is salicylic acid topical?

Salicylic acid topical (for the skin) is used in the treatment of acne, [eczema](#), [dandruff](#), seborrhea or [psoriasis](#), corns, calluses, [warts](#) and prevent symptom recurrence.

Salicylic acid topical may also be used for purposes not listed in this medication guide.

Salicylic acid topical side effects

Salicylic acid topical can cause a serious allergic reaction or severe skin irritation. Stop using salicylic acid topical and get emergency medical help if you have: [wheezing](#) or trouble breathing, hives, [itching](#), feeling light-headed, or swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Also stop using salicylic acid topical and call your doctor at once if you have:

- severe burning, stinging, peeling, dryness, or irritation after using this medicine.

Common side effects of salicylic acid topical may include:

- [minor skin irritation](#), [rash](#), itching, stinging, dryness; or
- color changes in treated skin.

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.



[Salicylic acid topical side effects](#) (more detail)

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Warnings

Salicylic acid topical can cause a serious allergic reaction or severe skin irritation. Stop using this medicine and get emergency medical help if you have: hives, itching, wheezing or difficult breathing, feeling light-headed, or swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Before taking this medicine

You should not use salicylic acid topical if you are allergic to it.

Ask a doctor or pharmacist if salicylic acid topical is safe to use if you have:

- blood circulation problems;
- skin tenderness or redness;
- [diabetes](#); or
- liver or kidney disease.

Ask a doctor before using this medicine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Using this medicine in a child or teenager with flu symptoms or [chickenpox](#) can cause **a serious or fatal condition called Reye's syndrome.**

How should I use salicylic acid topical?

Use exactly as directed on the label, or as prescribed by your doctor.

Salicylic acid topical is available in many different forms, such as liquid, gel, lotion, cream, ointment, foam, soap, shampoo, and cloth pads.

Do not switch brand forms without advice from your doctor or pharmacist.

Taking more than your recommended dose will not make this medicine more effective, and may cause serious side effects.

Do not take by mouth. Topical medicine is for use only on the skin.

Ask your doctor before using salicylic acid topical if the condition covers a large area of the body.

Do not bandage treated skin or expose it to heat. Your skin may absorb the medicine, which could cause harmful effects.

Do not use salicylic acid topical to treat any skin condition that has not been checked by your doctor.

Do not touch the tip of the ointment tube or place it directly on the skin. A contaminated tube can infect your skin.

Call your doctor if your symptoms do not improve, or if they get worse.

Shake the salicylic acid topical **foam** well before each use. Turn the medicine canister upside down to dispense the foam.

Store salicylic acid topical away from open flame or high heat. Do not puncture or burn an empty container.

Store this medicine in the original container at room temperature, away from moisture and heat.

Salicylic acid topical dosing information

Usual Adult Dose for Acne:

Salicylic acid topical 1% pad:

Cleanse affected area. Apply 2 to 3 times daily. If dryness occurs, reduce to every other or once a day.

Usual Adult Dose for Dermatological Disorders:

Salicylic acid topical 16.7% liquid:

Wash and dry area thoroughly. Apply enough to cover each wart 1 to 2 times daily.

Salicylic acid 3% topical soap:

Apply to affect areas at least twice weekly. Leave lather on scalp or skin for two minutes then rinse. Repeat if necessary.

Salicylic acid topical 6% cream:

Apply to affected area once daily. Hydrate area for 5 minutes prior to application if possible. Occlude the area at night.

Wash off in morning.

Salicylic acid topical 6% lotion:

Apply to affected area once daily. Hydrate area for 5 minutes prior to application if possible. Occlude the area at night.

Wash off in morning.

Salicylic acid topical 6% foam:

Apply to affected area once daily at bedtime. Hydrate area for 5 minutes prior to application if possible. Occlude the area after application. Wash off in morning.

Usual Pediatric Dose for Acne:

Salicylic acid topical 1% pad:

12 years or older: Cleanse affected area. Apply 2 to 3 times daily. If dryness occurs, reduce to every other or once a day.

 [Detailed Salicylic acid topical dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Salicylic acid topical is used when needed. If you are on a dosing schedule, skip any missed dose. **Do not** use two doses at one time.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 if anyone has accidentally swallowed the medicine.

What should I avoid while using salicylic acid topical?

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before using over-the-counter medicines that may contain ingredients similar to salicylic acid topical.

Avoid using salicylic acid topical on open wounds or on sunburned, windburned, dry, or irritated skin.

Avoid getting this medicine in your eyes or mouth. **Rinse with water if this medicine gets in your eyes or mouth.**

Certain salicylic acid topical products are flammable. Do not use near high heat or open flame. Do not smoke until the **gel** has completely dried on your skin.

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

What other drugs will affect salicylic acid topical?

Medicine used on the skin is not likely to be affected by other drugs you use, but many drugs can interact. Tell your doctor about all your current medicines, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, [vitamins](#), and [herbal products](#).

 [Salicylic acid topical drug interactions](#) (more detail)

Does salicylic acid topical interact with my other drugs?

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

salicylic acid topical

+

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Patient resources

- [Salicylic acid advanced reading](#)
- [Salicylic Acid \(Psoriasis or Seborrheic Dermatitis\)](#)
- [Salicylic Acid Cream and Lotion \(Keratoses\)](#)
- [Salicylic Acid Cream, Gel, Liquid, and Lotion \(Acne\)](#)
- [Salicylic Acid Foam](#)

Other brands

[Compound W](#), [Wart Remover](#), [Salex](#), [Dermarest Psoriasis Skin Treatment](#), ... +59 more

Professional resources

- [Salicylic Acid monograph](#)
- [Salicylic Acid \(FDA\)](#)
- [Salicylic Acid Foam \(FDA\)](#)
- [Salicylic Acid Gel \(FDA\)](#)
- [Salicylic Acid Liquid \(FDA\)](#)

Other brands

[Salex](#), [Salvax](#), [Keralyt Shampoo](#), [KeralytGel](#), ... +6 more

Related treatment guides

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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.

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DRUG STATUS

Availability
Rx and/or OTC

CSA Schedule*
N/A Not a controlled drug



User Reviews & Ratings

7.3 / 10

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