



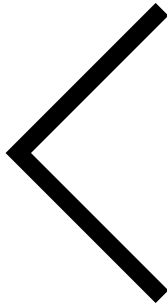
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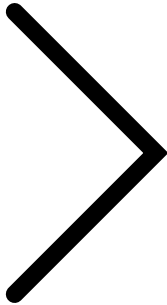
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# ISOTRETINOIN: FAQs

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## Will isotretinoin cure me?

Treatment with isotretinoin often results in prolonged clearance of acne, which can be permanent for some patients. A course of treatment generally lasts about 4 to 5 months. It can run shorter or longer.

Some patients do not clear after one course of treatment, and a second course of treatment may be an option. Studies show this helps some patients see clear skin. You should wait at least 8 weeks between treatments. The skin often continues to clear for a while after patients stop taking the medication.

## How do I use isotretinoin?

This medication comes in pill form. You will take one or two pills a day as your dermatologist prescribes.

Before taking isotretinoin, your dermatologist will enroll you in a risk-management program called the [iPLEDGE® REMS](#). Created by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), this program helps to ensure that patients:

- Do not start taking isotretinoin while pregnant.
- Do not become pregnant while taking isotretinoin.

Because iPLEDGE REMS informs patients about other possible side effects, all patients must be enrolled in this program before taking isotretinoin .

## How long will I have to take isotretinoin?

One course of treatment generally takes about 4 to 5 months. You may need a shorter or longer treatment time.

## How does isotretinoin work?

This is the only acne treatment that attacks all four causes of acne—excess oil production, clogged pores in the skin, too much of the bacteria *P. acnes*, and inflammation. This makes isotretinoin very effective.

## Do I need to take any precautions while using isotretinoin?

Yes. You will need to learn about the potential side effects before you decide whether to take isotretinoin.

If you and your dermatologist decide that this medication is right for you, your dermatologist will enroll you in a risk-management program. While taking isotretinoin, you will need to do the following:

- See your dermatologist every 30 days for a follow-up appointment, either in-person or by [telemedicine](#).
- Immediately report any possible side effect to your dermatologist.
- Do not wax to remove hair while taking this medicine, and for 6 months after you stop taking isotretinoin.
- Protect your skin from the sun and do not use a tanning bed, sun lamp, or other indoor tanning device.
- Do not donate blood while taking isotretinoin and for 30 days after you take your last pill.

Patients who can get pregnant also need to take the following precautions:

- Take the required pregnancy tests.
- Use two approved forms of birth control or do not have sex or any sexual contact.



## Isotretinoin and pregnancy

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It is especially important to not be pregnant or become pregnant while taking isotretinoin.

## What are the possible side effects?

A number of possible side effects can occur while taking this medicine.

You can learn about the safeguards that help prevent side effects, at: [Isotretinoin: The truth about side effects](#).

## Is it safe to remove hair with wax while taking isotretinoin?

No waxing, please. Waxing can cause permanent scars in people taking isotretinoin. To avoid scarring, you must not wax while taking isotretinoin and for six months after you stop taking isotretinoin. This applies to hot wax and cold wax.

## Does isotretinoin increase risk of sunburn?

If you plan to spend time outdoors, it is important to know that isotretinoin can make your skin more sensitive to the sun. You can sunburn unexpectedly and quickly. To protect your skin, dermatologists recommend that people taking isotretinoin:

- Seek shade when outdoors.
- Wear sun-protective clothing, such as lightweight, long-sleeved shirt, pants, and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Apply sunscreen to all skin not covered by clothing.



## Isotretinoin: Think sun protection

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It is important that patients taking isotretinoin protect their skin from the sun.

The type of sunscreen you use is important. Be sure to use sunscreen that offers:

- Broad-spectrum protection (bottle may say “UVA/UVB protection”)
- An SPF of 30 or greater
- Water resistance

Because isotretinoin can make your skin more sensitive, it is especially important that you not tan. This includes not using indoor tanning (sunlamps and tanning beds) while taking isotretinoin.

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**Reference**

Elminan M, Bird ST, Delaney JA *et al.* "Isotretinoin and Risk for Inflammatory Bowel Disease." *JAMA Dermatol.* 2013 Feb 1;149(2):216-20.

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