

Spirolactone

Spirolactone is an anti-androgen (anti-male hormone) medication. It blocks the androgen receptor and reduces the level of testosterone and DHEAS. It also has diuretic effects and can lower blood pressure and reduce fluid retention seen in conditions such as heart failure and chronic liver disease. This medication can also treat hypokalaemia (low potassium levels).

What is spironolactone used for?

Spirolactone in dermatology is mainly used to treat acne, hirsutism (excessive hormonal hair) and female pattern hairloss.

Precautions

- Spirolactone may cause birth defects or miscarriage. You should not fall pregnant on this drug. If you think you may be pregnant, stop taking the drug immediately and contact your dermatologist.
- Do not give your medication to anyone else.
- Avoid this medication if you have renal impairment or Addison's disease.
- Do not breastfeed on this medication..
- Avoid taking this medication if you are taking other potassium sparing agents, ACE-inhibitors or angiotensin II antagonists, digoxin, steroids, other diuretics (fluid tablets).

Monitoring

In general a blood test is required before and during treatment with spironolactone. This is to check your kidney function and electrolytes (especially potassium). The blood pressure may also be monitored.

This information leaflet was written by Dr Eleni Yiasemides of SouthDerm.

What to expect on Spirolactone and potential side effects

In general, the desired effects of spironolactone take months to develop and it may take 6 months or longer before you see an improvement in your condition.

Spirolactone can cause dizziness or light-headedness. Get your doctor to check your blood pressure if you experience these symptoms. Ensure you drink enough water throughout the day. Taking the spironolactone at night may help with these symptoms.

Spirolactone can cause headaches, nausea or diarrhoea.

Spirolactone can make your period cycle (menstruation) irregular. You may notice your periods may stop altogether or that you have spot bleeding in between normal periods.

Spirolactone can cause breast changes that are benign in nature. Enlargement (gynaecomastia) or swelling or tenderness of the breasts can occur.

Leg cramps

Some patients report decrease libido (sex-drive) when on this medication

Tell your dermatologist if you experience these. In most cases, these improve when you stop treatment. **Other potential side effects have been reported. Please refer to the product information that is provided with the medication.** Ensure you have read this and understand it before taking this medication.