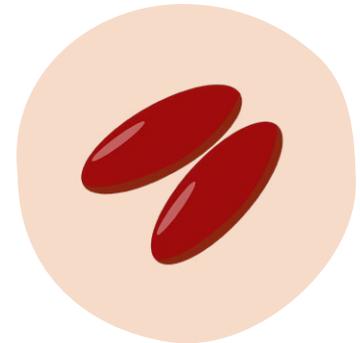


# Isotretinoin

## What is isotretinoin?

Isotretinoin is a tablet medication used to treat acne. It works by reducing the amount of oil produced by your skin which stops pimples forming.



## How do I take isotretinoin?

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- ✓ You need to have a blood test before you start isotretinoin and 2 months after starting.
- ✓ If you miss a dose, do not take double, just skip that dose.
- ✓ Take it with food, it is best to take it with dinner.

## What should I avoid while taking isotretinoin?

- ✗ Do not become pregnant while taking isotretinoin or for 1-month after stopping isotretinoin, it can be very harmful to the baby.
- ✗ Do not donate blood, you can only do this at least 1 month after stopping isotretinoin.
- ✗ Do not share isotretinoin with other people.
- ✗ Do not go out into the sun without sunscreen, a hat, sun protective clothes and sunglasses.
- ✗ Avoid waxing, IPL and laser while taking isotretinoin.
- ✗ Avoid getting tattoos and piercings while taking isotretinoin.
- ✓ If you see a beautician, let them know you are taking isotretinoin.
- ✓ Let your skin doctor know if you wear contact lenses.



# Isotretinoin

## What are some side effects and what should I do?

### Common

- ◉ **Dry skin:** Use a gentle soap-free wash in the shower and apply a moisturiser following.
- ◉ **Dry eyes:** Use preservative-free lubricating eye drops (from the chemist).
- ◉ **Dry lips or cracked corners of the mouth:** Use Vaseline®, Paw-Paw ointment or similar for your lips – reapply every few hours.
- ◉ **Dry nose:** Use a saline spray regularly.
- ◉ **Worsening of acne:** This can occur in the first 1-2 months of starting isotretinoin, and is why you are started on a low dose that is slowly increased. If you are concerned you are having severe worsening of acne, stop taking isotretinoin and contact the clinic.
- ◉ **Sunburn:** Wear sunscreen every day (reapplying every 2 hours if outdoors), a hat and sun-protective clothing.
- ◉ **Ingrown nails:** Put Betadine® or similar on the area twice daily and stop isotretinoin until you are seen in clinic.



### Uncommon

If you experience any of the rare side effects listed below, stop isotretinoin and contact the clinic for review.

- ◉ **Headaches**
- ◉ **Muscle aches:** Avoid repetitive heavy weights and intense exercise. Stay well hydrated during exercise.
- ◉ **Hearing or vision problems**
- ◉ **Changes in mood:** While the research shows low mood is less likely in those patients with acne taking isotretinoin, very rarely patients may describe a worsening mood.

Your blood tests will be monitored for changes in liver enzymes and cholesterol levels, which can uncommonly occur.

### Your recommended products:

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**Want more information?** Visit [dermnetnz.org](http://dermnetnz.org) or [dermcoll.edu.au/a-to-z-of-skin](http://dermcoll.edu.au/a-to-z-of-skin)

This factsheet was developed as part of the Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin Project.