

How to administer oral Isotretinoin at home

Isotretinoin is a retinoid, closely related to Vitamin A, which can be used as part of some chemotherapy regimens to treat some types of cancer such as neuroblastoma. It is also known as 13-cis-retinoic acid.

It is given by mouth in capsule form. It is usually given twice a day.

Please inform your child's doctor if your child is able to swallow the capsules whole or not. This is important because if your child cannot swallow the capsules whole, the dose prescribed may need to be altered.

Important: soya or peanut allergy

Isotretinoin capsules contain soya bean oil therefore if your child has a known soya allergy, please inform your child's doctor. Exceptionally rarely, patients with peanut allergy might have a cross reaction to soya. Please inform your child's doctor if this is the case.

Common side effects

Isotretinoin can increase your child's skin sensitivity to sunlight, therefore your child should avoid intense sunlight. A hat and sun cream with SPF of 50 or higher should be used.

Common side effects include dry or peeling skin and cracked lips. Your child would benefit from the use of a skin moisturising lotion or cream and a lip balm. Products containing Vitamin E are particularly effective.

Isotretinoin may cause dry eyes, decreased night vision or potential eye infections. These usually resolve after discontinuation of therapy but can be helped by applying lubricating eye ointment or tear replacement therapy. Please inform the doctor if your child experiences visual difficulties.

Other side effects can include headache, nausea and vomiting, visual disturbances, depression and/or anxiety. Please report any side effects to your child's doctor.

Anyone receiving or handling this medication must be aware that **Isotretinoin can cause major birth defects**. It should not be given to patients who may be pregnant or are likely to become pregnant in the near future, therefore effective birth control is essential. If you are handling this medication and are trying to conceive or are pregnant, you will need to wear gloves.

Patients should not take additional vitamin A supplements due to the risk of overdose.

Important information for the safe administration of your child's medication

- Medicines should always be taken as directed by your doctor.
- Keep all medicines in a safe place where children cannot see or reach them.
- You should handle Isotretinoin with care, avoid touching the capsules directly. Wear a pair of household rubber gloves to protect yourself. Do not use these gloves for any other purpose.
- If you forget to give your child a dose, do not give them a double dose. Inform your nurse or doctor and keep to your child's regular dose schedule.
- If you accidentally spill the contents of the capsules, wash the area thoroughly with plenty of soapy water.
- If the contents of the capsules accidentally splashes into your eyes, wash with plenty of running water for ten minutes.
- If your child vomits after taking their dose, do not repeat the dose. Seek advice from your local hospital.
- Dispose of paper towels, vomit soiled waste or dirty disposable nappies in a separate rubbish bag and place in your normal rubbish.
- Please return any unused capsules to your local hospital for disposal.

How to take Isotretinoin capsules

- Capsules should ideally be swallowed whole.
- Ask your child to rest a capsule at the back of his or her mouth.
- Give your child a drink.
- The capsule should be swallowed along with the drink.
- It can help to look up while swallowing.

How to open Isotretinoin capsules for children who are unable to swallow capsules

If your child is unable to swallow capsules these guidelines have been developed to maximise the amount of drug recovered from the capsule and to minimise the risk of skin contact, especially to women of child bearing age.

You will need the following equipment (used solely for this purpose):

- Pair of disposable gloves
- Sharp clean scissors
- 1 dessert spoon
- 1 teaspoon
- 1 small tray (plastic or disposable cardboard)
- Small portion of ice cream/yoghurt/chocolate mousse
- Kitchen roll
- Sharps bin
- Plastic medicine pot

This procedure should be carried out on a clean, clear working surface in a quiet room with the door closed.

1. Put on your gloves.
2. Remove capsules from the blister pack and transfer required number of capsules for each dose into the medicine pot.
3. Place dessert spoon on clean surface.
4. Take one capsule between finger and thumb and hold upright firmly.
5. Working over the tray use the scissors to snip the top off the capsule into the tray.
6. Carefully squeeze the contents of the capsule onto the dessert spoon.
7. Discard empty capsule straight into the sharps bin.
8. Use kitchen roll to wipe any drug from gloves then dispose of the kitchen roll immediately into the sharps bin.
9. Repeat steps 4-8 for each capsule needed.
10. After all the capsules have been snipped, use the teaspoon to place some soft ice cream or yoghurt onto the dessert spoon.
11. Using the teaspoon mix the ice cream/yoghurt and medicine together.
12. Give the medicine to your child.
13. Clean the surface with kitchen roll and wash all equipment, including scissors, in hot soapy water.
14. Throw the disposable gloves in the sharps bin.
15. Wash your hands thoroughly.
16. Return the sharps bin to the hospital when full.

Alternatively if your child has a nasogastric tube, the following method can be used to prepare the dose.

In addition to the requirements previously listed, you will also need:

- 2 x 5ml enteral syringes
- 1 x 10ml enteral syringe
- 1 universal container/plastic bag
- 1 foil bowl
- Sterile water (10ml in syringe)
- Olive oil (0.3-0.5ml x 2 in syringes) or 5-10ml of warm milk

1. Put on your gloves.
2. Remove capsules from blister pack and transfer required number of capsules for each dose to the plastic bag/universal container and put the lid on.
3. Put a small amount of hot water in the foil bowl.
4. Stand the capsules (in universal container/plastic bag) in the foil bowl for 1-2 minutes to soften them (to make it easier to cut into the capsules).
5. Line the plastic tray with kitchen roll.
6. Place dessert spoon onto the tray.
7. Take a capsule between finger and thumb and hold firmly upright. With the scissors snip the tip of the capsule into the tray.
8. Carefully squeeze the contents of the capsule onto the dessert spoon.
9. Discard empty capsule in cytotoxic waste bin.
10. Use a fresh piece of kitchen roll to wipe any drug from the gloves then dispose of kitchen roll immediately in the cytotoxic waste bin.
11. Repeat steps 7 to 10 for each capsule needed.
12. After all the required capsules have been snipped, add 0.3ml of olive oil or warm milk to the dessert spoon.
13. Using the teaspoon, mix the olive oil and medicine together.
14. Draw olive oil and medicine into a syringe.
15. Draw a further 0.3-0.5ml of olive oil or 5-10ml warm milk into a second syringe (to use as a flush after giving medicine).
16. Draw up 10ml of sterile water into a third syringe (to flush nasogastric/gastrostomy tube after olive oil flush).
17. Give medicine to the child via nasogastric/gastrostomy tube.
18. Flush with the 0.3-0.5ml olive oil (or 5-10ml warm milk).
19. Give a further flush of 10ml of water.
20. Collect and discard all paper from the tray then carefully wash all equipment, including scissors, in hot soapy water.
21. Dry equipment with fresh kitchen towel.
22. Dispose of gloves and syringes in cytotoxic waste bin.
23. Wash hands thoroughly.
24. Return cytotoxic waste bin to hospital when full.

If at any time you are concerned about your child whilst they are taking this medicine, please telephone the contact numbers on the contact sheet in your patient/parent held oncology record for advice from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.