

Isotretinoin

General Information:

Isotretinoin is a medication we use for severe acne or acne that has been resistant to other treatments. Its great benefit is that it has the potential to cure your acne, and the majority of people who take it will not require further treatment.

However, isotretinoin is a serious medication with many potential side effects, and it must be monitored closely.

- You will be required to come for **monthly clinic visits and occasional blood work**. Please do not eat for six hours before your visit so that your blood can be drawn while you are fasting.
- We will review side effects with you prior to therapy and you must sign one or more forms before you start this drug. Patients under the age of 18 will need a parent or guardian present during this visit.
- Please ask us if you have any questions regarding your treatment.
- If you are experiencing any new symptoms, please notify our office at **205-682-8022**.
- You **cannot donate blood** while taking this medication.
- This medication will make you more sensitive to the **sun**.
- You should stop all of your other acne therapy when you start isotretinoin.
- Most people will require around **6 months of treatment**.
- **Do not take vitamin A supplements** or drink **alcohol** while on this medication.
- **Isotretinoin** must be taken with fatty food, except for the brand Absorica which can be taken with or without food.

Female Patients:

- Females who become pregnant while taking isotretinoin have a much higher chance of having a baby with **birth defects**. For this reason, females are required by law to use **2 forms of birth control** while taking this medication and for 1 month after it is completed.
- Isotretinoin will not affect future pregnancies.

Potential Side Effects:

- **Dryness:** Isotretinoin will make your eyes, lips, nose, and skin dry. We encourage you to start using moisturizers early. Use ointment for your lips (e.g., *Aquaphor*) and saline nasal spray for nosebleeds.
- **Elevated Fats:** Most people will have some elevation of the fats in their blood (*cholesterol and triglycerides*), which will be monitored closely at your monthly visits.
- **Depression & Suicide:** While studies have not shown a definitive link, we take this potential side effect seriously. Please tell your doctor if you have a history of depression.
- **Inflammatory Bowel Disease:** Recent large studies do not show a risk of this medication causing inflammatory bowel disease. However, if you have a personal or family history of inflammatory bowel disease, please notify your doctor.
- **Other Side Effects:** Rarely, isotretinoin can affect your liver or blood counts, cause headaches, joint or muscle pain, or skeletal symptoms. Some people may also notice difficulty with night vision or hair loss.
- You should not have any **waxing or cosmetic procedures** done while on this medication.