



Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust: Information for Families

Acetylcysteine

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with any information provided by the manufacturer.

This information describes the medicine acetylcysteine, how it is given and some of its possible side effects. Each person reacts differently to medicines so your child will not necessarily suffer every side effect mentioned. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist or telephone one of the contact numbers on this information sheet.

What is acetylcysteine?

Acetylcysteine is a medicine derived from an artificial form of an amino acid found naturally in the body. It is used to decrease the amount of mucus produced by the body in conditions such as pneumonia and other respiratory infections.

How is it given?

Acetylcysteine is available in various forms, including sachets or powder and effervescent tablets. Acetylcysteine sachets are not available in the UK so have to be imported from abroad.

The contents of a sachet should be mixed with a strong tasting drink, such as squash or cola to disguise the strong smell. Mix the sachet and fluid well so that no powder remains and give it to your child to swallow. He or she may want another drink afterwards.

Put the effervescent tablets in a glass of water until they have dissolved thoroughly and give it to your child to swallow.

Acetylcysteine can react with products made of rubber or metal. Avoid making the drink in a metal cup and use a plastic spoon to stir the mixture.





Who should not take acetylcysteine?

People with the following conditions should discuss taking acetylcysteine with their doctor.

- Hypersensitivity to acetylcysteine or any of its ingredients
- Pregnant, could be pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding

What are the side effects?

- Drowsiness – Your child may seem more sleepy than usual. If this becomes troublesome, for instance interfering with schoolwork, please tell the doctor.
- Nausea, vomiting and/or mouth sores – This can be helped by mixing the sachet with a strong tasting drink. Mouth sores can be treated using over the counter treatments.
- Allergic reaction – Some people develop an allergic reaction to acetylcysteine, which may be mild or severe. Signs of a mild allergic reaction include skin rashes and itching, high temperature, shivering, redness of the face, a feeling of dizziness or a headache. If you see any of these signs, please report them to a doctor or nurse. Signs of a severe allergic reaction include any of the

above, as well as shortness of breath or chest pain. If you are in hospital and your child shows signs of a severe allergic reaction, call a doctor or nurse immediately. If you are at home and your child shows signs of a severe allergic reaction, call an ambulance immediately. If your child has a severe reaction to acetylcysteine, the subsequent treatment will probably be changed.

Acetylcysteine and other medicines

Some medicines can react with acetylcysteine, altering how well it works. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving your child any other medicines, including herbal or complementary medicines. The following are known to react with acetylcysteine.

- Charcoal
- Isosorbide dinitrate
- Isosorbide mononitrate
- Glyceryl trinitrate

Acetylcysteine should not be taken with other cough medicines as this can loosen too much mucus making it difficult for your child to cough it away.



Important information

- Store all medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.
- The sachets and tablets should be kept in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight or heat. They do not need to be kept in the fridge. Make up only one dose at a time.
- If your doctor decides to stop treatment with acetylcysteine, return any unused sachets or tablets to the pharmacist. Do not flush them down the toilet or throw them away.
- If your child vomits after the dose, do not give them another dose.
- If you forget to give your child a dose and it is within a few hours of when the dose was due, give it as soon as you remember. Otherwise, do not give this dose but take the next dose when it is due. Do not give a double dose.

Notes

Useful numbers

GOSH switchboard: 020 7405 9200

Pharmacy department:
020 7829 8680

Pharmacy medicines information:
020 7829 8608

Compiled by the Pharmacy department in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group

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