



## **SPIRONOLACTONE**

Spironolactone – oral

(common brand name: Aldactone)

Uses:

Spironolactone is used to treat high blood pressure. Lowering high blood pressure helps prevent strokes, heart attacks, and kidney problems. It is also used to treat swelling (edema) caused by certain conditions (e.g., congestive heart failure) by removing excess fluid and improving symptoms such as breathing problems.

This medication is also used to treat low potassium levels and conditions in which the body is making too much of a natural chemical (aldosterone).

Spironolactone is known as a “water pill” (potassium-sparing diuretic).

Other uses:

This medication has also been used to treat acne in women, female pattern hair loss, and excessive hair growth (hirsutism), especially in women with polycystic ovary disease.

Side effects:

Drowsiness, lightheadedness, stomach upset, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, or headache may occur. To minimize lightheadedness, get up slowly when rising from a seated or lying position. If any of these effects persist or worsen, notify your doctor promptly.

Tell your doctor immediately if any of these unlikely but serious side effects occur; dizziness, increased thirst, change in the amount of urine, mental/mood changes, unusual fatigue/weakness, muscle spasms, menstrual period changes, sexual function problems.

This medication may lead to high levels of potassium, especially in patients with kidney problems. If not treated, very high potassium levels can be fatal. Tell your doctor immediately if you notice any of the following unlikely but serious side effects: slow/irregular heartbeat, muscle weakness.

Precautions:

Before taking spironolactone, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or if you have any other allergies. Do not take if pregnant or if there is a possibility of becoming pregnant.

This medication should not be used if you have certain medical conditions. Before using this medicine, consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have: no urine output (anuria), severe kidney disease, high blood potassium (hyperkalemia).

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, especially of: liver or kidney problems, untreated mineral imbalance (e.g., low sodium).

Before having surgery, tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking this medication.

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy. Do not drive, use machinery, or do any activity that requires alertness until you are sure you can perform such activities safely. Limit alcoholic beverages.

This drug breaks down into other products that pass into breast milk. Therefore, breast-feeding while using this medication is not recommended. Consult your doctor before breast-feeding.

Drug interactions:

This drug should not be used with the following medication because very serious interactions may occur: eplerenone.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist of all prescription and nonprescription/herbal products you may use, especially of: corticosteroids (e.g., prednisone), certain hormones (ACTH), digoxin, lithium, mitotane, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, indomethacin, other diuretics that increase potassium (e.g., amiloride, triamterene)

Other medications besides this medication which may increase your potassium levels include cyclosporine, tacrolimus, potassium supplements, ACE inhibitors (e.g., Captopril, lisinopril) or ARBs (e.g., losartan, candesartan). Follow your doctor's instructions carefully and continue medications for your condition as directed. Limit foods high in potassium such as bananas, tomatoes, potatoes, low-salt milk, and salt substitutes. Consult your doctor or pharmacist for more details, including diet recommendations. It is important to keep all medical and laboratory appointments so your doctor can monitor your potassium level regularly.

Check the labels on all your medicines (e.g., cough-and-cold products, diet aids, NSAIDs for pain/fever reduction) because they may contain ingredients that could increase your blood pressure or worsen swelling (edema). Some nonprescription medicines that contain aspirin may decrease the effects of spironolactone. Low-dose aspirin, as prescribed by your doctor for specific medical reasons such as heart attack or stroke prevention (usually these dosages are

81-325 milligrams per day) should be continued. Consult your doctor or pharmacist for more details.

This medication can affect the results of certain lab tests (e.g., digoxin or cortisol levels). Make sure laboratory personnel and your doctors know you use this drug.

This document does not contain all possible interactions. Therefore, before using this product, tell your doctor or pharmacist of all the products you use. Keep a list of all your medications with you, and share the list with your doctor and pharmacist.

Missed dose:

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

### **Spironolactone for hair loss**

For unknown reasons, androgens cause scalp hairs to miniaturize (alopecia) and body hair to grow or enlarge (hirsutism). In the treatment of hair loss, spironolactone acts by blocking the effects of androgens (male hormones) on scalp hair follicles. At the same time, it can also reduce the amount of body hair that you have.

Due to the feminization effects of spironolactone, this drug is only used to treat female pattern hair loss and is not used in males.

What should I expect to see with spironolactone (Aldactone) treatment?

Many women affected by female pattern hair loss experience an increase in hair shedding or a reduction in hair volume, or both. You may start to notice a reduction in hair shedding within 4 months of commencing treatment with spironolactone.

It is important to note that the hairs you shed now actually died 3 months ago and had been sitting dormant in the follicle until new hairs grow to replace them. As such, there would be a delay of about 3 months before the effects of spironolactone are seen after commencing treatment.

By about 8 months, there may be a reduction in the amount of body hair. By about 12 months, some women may experience a slight increase in their hair density on the scalp. It is important to manage expectations with spironolactone treatment as the main aim is to slow or stop the progression of hair loss rather than expecting hair regrowth. Any regrowth is considered a bonus.

What are the side effects when spironolactone is used for hair loss?

This is a relatively safe medicine that has been around for 30 years and was originally developed to treat high blood pressure. Only in the last 10 years has it been used regularly to treat female pattern hair loss.

Common side effects are dizziness and tiredness, which may disappear in the first few days of treatment. Due to their effects on altering potassium level in the blood, it is sometimes recommended to have blood tests before you commence treatment and during treatment although newer studies have shown this does not appear to be a concern when the medicine is used for acne or hair loss.

Some women may have breast tenderness and menstrual irregularities that usually settle within the first 3-4 months of treatment.

Allergic skin rashes are rare with spironolactone but if you develop a new rash and you suspect that this is related to spironolactone, see your doctor immediately.

It is highly recommended to use an oral contraceptive pill so you do not get pregnant while on spironolactone treatment as it is harmful to the unborn baby.

What if I stop taking spironolactone (Aldactone)?

The effects of spironolactone will only be seen with continued medication and will wear off quickly once it is stopped. It is recommended that treatment should continue for at least 1-2 months (even up to 3) before assessing any benefit from it.