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## Acitretin capsules for psoriasis (Neotigason)

Acitretin will be prescribed for you by a skin specialist doctor.

Take your doses during a mealtime. Swallow the capsule(s) with a drink of milk or water.

Avoid bright sunlight or use a high-factor sun cream (SPF 15 or greater). Do not use sunbeds.

Acitretin is harmful to unborn babies. You MUST use effective contraception if you could get pregnant.

### About acitretin

Type of medicine	A retinoid medicine (similar to vitamin A)
Used for	Severe psoriasis and some other skin conditions
Also called	Neotigason®
Available as	Capsules

Acitretin is used to treat severe skin conditions where the surface of the skin has become thick and scaly. Normally, as new skin cells are produced, older ones are lost. If the skin cells in the outer layer of your skin multiply faster than normal, the old skin cells can build up on the surface of your skin, causing thick or scaly patches.

Acitretin is a retinoid medicine, which means simply that it is related to vitamin A. Our bodies use vitamin A to maintain a healthy skin. Acitretin helps to control conditions like [psoriasis](#) by making your skin grow more normally.

Acitretin is sometimes used as a treatment on its own but, more often, it is used alongside other preparations to help the skin's condition.

## Before taking acitretin

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking acitretin it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding. This is because you must **not** take acitretin if you think you are (or think you may be) pregnant.
- If you have any problems with the way your liver works, or any problems with the way your kidneys work.
- If you have high levels of fats (lipids) such as cholesterol in your blood.
- If you have diabetes (diabetes mellitus).
- If you are taking or using any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

## How to take acitretin

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside your pack and any other information that you are given by your doctor. The leaflets will give you more information about acitretin and will provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you could experience from taking it.

- Take the capsules exactly as your doctor tells you to. Acitretin is taken once daily. Your doctor will tell you how many capsules to take and this will also be printed on the label of the pack to remind you about what the doctor said to you. Take each of your doses with a snack, or just after eating a meal. It is a good idea to swallow the capsules with a drink of water or milk.
  - Try to take your doses of acitretin at the same time of day each day, as this will help you to remember to take them regularly. If you forget to take a dose at the usual time, take it when you remember. If you do not remember until the following day, then miss out the forgotten dose. Do not take two doses together to make up for a missed dose.
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## Getting the most from your treatment

- It is important for you to keep your regular appointments with your doctor. This is so your doctor can check on your progress. You will need to have regular blood tests during the treatment. The tests will check that your lipid levels are normal and that your liver remains healthy. If you are a woman, you may also need to have regular tests to confirm that you are not pregnant.
- It can take 2-4 weeks before you start to feel the benefit from the capsules and it may take up to four months before you feel the maximum benefit. A course of treatment is likely to last for up to six months but occasionally it can be for longer than this.
- Acitretin is harmful to unborn babies, so it is very important that you do not become pregnant while you are taking it. Your doctor will advise you about suitable contraception and this may include using more than one method. You should continue to use suitable contraception for at least three years after you finish your course of treatment. If at any time during your treatment or the three years afterwards, you think you may be pregnant, contact your doctor for advice straightaway.
- If you buy any medicines, vitamins, or herbal preparations, please check with your doctor or a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with acitretin. This is because you must not take any other preparation which contains vitamin A.

- Acitretin can cause your skin to become more sensitive to sunlight than normal. Protect your skin from sunlight even on bright but cloudy days and do not use sunbeds.
- If you normally drink alcohol, please ask your doctor for advice. Your doctor may recommend that you do not drink alcohol while you are on this medicine.
- If you have diabetes you may need to check your blood sugar (glucose) more frequently, as acitretin can affect the levels of sugar in your blood. Your doctor will advise you about this.
- You must not give blood while you are on acitretin and for at least three years after you finish taking it. This is because it could cause harm to other people.

## **Can acitretin cause problems?**

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with acitretin. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with the medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Common acitretin side-effects (these affect around 1 in 10 people)	What can I do if I experience this?
Dry mouth, feeling thirsty, sore mouth	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets. If this continues, ask your doctor for advice
Dry or irritated eyes, blurred vision, and reduced night vision	Take extra care when driving at night. If this becomes troublesome, speak with your doctor
Dry skin and lips, peeling	Use a moisturising cream and lip balm regularly. After peeling, the new skin often appears more normal
Tummy (abdominal) pain, feeling sick (nausea), diarrhoea	Stick to simple meals (avoid rich or spicy foods). Drink plenty of water to replace any lost fluids
Muscle and joint pain	Let your doctor know about this so that it can be investigated
Headache	Drink plenty of water and ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headaches continue, let your doctor know
Dry or irritated nose, nosebleeds, weak nails, swollen feet and ankles, mood changes, loss of hair and changes in hair texture	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your doctor

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the capsules, please speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

## How to store acitretin

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.

- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

## Important information about all medicines

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, please tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking or using.

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine, ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

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## Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Acitretin 10 mg and 25 mg Capsules](#); Genus Pharmaceuticals Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated August 2020.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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