

G.E. Coppola MD, CCFP

Phone 281-2020

Patient Instructions for Accutane therapy

Accutane is a potent and highly effective drug treatment for severe acne or acne which has not adequately responded to other standard forms of treatment. There are a number of potential side effects from Accutane, which fortunately are not common, requiring careful monitoring during your course of treatment. Dryness of skin, nose, eyes and lips is the most common. Birth defects in fetuses in females who become pregnant while on Accutane is another more serious side effect (see below). Liver injury or elevation of cholesterol can occur and are monitored with regular blood tests. **Depression** can be a significant side effect in some people and needs to be watched for. If you are having problems with depression prior to starting Accutane please advise your doctor as Accutane may not be a good choice for you at this time. The treatment period will last about 4-6 months depending on your tolerance of the medication. Improvement will continue for a few months even after you are done the treatment. Some people will have a recurrence of their acne even after a successful course of Accutane. This may require going back to some other standard treatments or, in some cases, another course of Accutane.

Appointment schedule

Please book followup appointments each month during the treatment. This is important to monitor your progress and to monitor problems from the treatment. Because in some people, not commonly, Accutane can affect your liver or significantly raise your blood lipid (fat) levels, you will be asked to have blood tests each month before your visit to the office to monitor these issues. You must fast for 12 hours, water and medication only can be taken during the 12 hour fast, before having your blood test at the lab. The same lab requisition will be used each month if you go to the same lab. They will keep your information on file there so you can just go in each month in the 12 hour fasting state.

Starting the treatment

1. Have your first set of fasting blood tests before starting your Accutane to establish baseline blood levels for you. You can start the pills right after having the blood tests.
2. Start the pills as directed.
3. Avoid alcohol during your treatment as both can affect your liver and together this is a more likely occurrence.
4. Book an appointment for one month to see me.

Dryness

This is the most common side effect while on the drug. To combat this we recommend the following:

Lips – Prevox, Presun lip balm, or other suitable lip balm you prefer

Nose – rhinaris nasal lubricant gel

Eyes – Natural Tears drops or Genteal drops

Face, Hands and Body– Nutraderm, Moisturel or other non scented moisturizer you prefer

Sunscreen – as your skin will be more sensitive to sunlight, please cover up and/or use a good sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher.

Special note for females

Children born to mother who become pregnant while on Accutane or during the first 1-2 months after off Accutane have a very good chance of having major, serious birth defects. For this reason it is mandatory to make sure that a highly effective method of birth control be used while you are being treated. We may request that you be on birth control pills for this reason. Do not start your Accutane pills until after the 3rd day of your next menstrual cycle to ensure you are not pregnant before starting. You may be asked to sign your chart indicating that you understand the risks of pregnancy while taking this drug.