



WESTLAKE
DERMATOLOGY
& Cosmetic Surgery

SPIRONOLACTONE

Spirolactone for Acne Treatment in Women: Spirolactone is used to treat many different disorders, from high blood pressure to fluid retention. Although the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not recognize spironolactone as an acne treatment, it is often prescribed off-label to treat hormonally influenced breakouts. Spirolactone is used as an acne treatment for women only. Spirolactone is only available by prescription from your doctor.

How It Works: Spirolactone is in a group of drugs classified as anti-androgens. Androgen hormones, like testosterone, are typically thought of as male hormones. But androgens are also present in the female body, although in lower levels. Some women produce more androgen hormones than needed. Anti-androgens like spironolactone block androgen receptors in the body, preventing cells from absorbing androgen hormones. Simply, spironolactone limits hormonal fluctuations that may contribute to acne breakouts. Hormones, specifically androgens, have been linked to the development of acne.

More About Hormones and Acne: Because of the way spironolactone works, only women whose acne has a hormonal basis will see results with spironolactone. But for those women who tend toward hormonal acne, the drug can help manage breakouts. Some studies found up to 66% of women who took spironolactone had excellent improvement or complete clearing of the skin. When used in combination with oral contraceptives this number jumps to 85%, according to one study.

Common Usage Directions: When using spironolactone as an acne treatment, the most common dosage is between 50 to 100 mg daily. Many dermatologists start off prescribing lower doses and work up to the target dosage over the course of several weeks. Your doctor will determine the most appropriate dosage for you, depending on your personal situation.

Possible Side Effects: Side effects with low dose spironolactone aren't as common as with higher doses, but can include irregular menstrual cycle (spotting), breast tenderness, thirst, dry mouth, stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, dizziness, increased blood potassium levels or low blood pressure. Both blood potassium levels and blood pressure should be checked periodically while you are taking this medication. It is extremely important to avoid pregnancy while using spironolactone as it can cause severe birth defects. Spirolactone may not be a good choice for you if you have kidney problems, or a history of breast cancer, uterine cancer, or ovarian cancer.

Tips for Using Spirolactone: Take your medication with a meal if it upsets your stomach. Drink plenty of water. Spirolactone acts as a diuretic. Be patient. It will probably take several weeks before you really notice an improvement in your skin. Let your provider know if you develop any side effects.

Guidelines for Taking Spirolactone: You may be required to have blood work completed prior to starting spironolactone. Your provider will determine if blood work is necessary to confirm that you are not pregnant. If you choose to continue spironolactone, you may be required to follow up and have labs periodically. If your provider increases the dose, then it may be recommended for you to have labs repeated to confirm that the medication is not affecting your kidney function or potassium level.