

## SPIRONOLACTONE

Spirolactone is a drug used to treat excessive hair growth. Spirolactone antagonizes the male hormone (through the androgen receptor) at the skin level, directly stopping new hair growth. How this process works is not yet understood.

Spirolactone is taken in doses ranging from 50 to 200 mg per day. The growth of extra hair happens over a long period of time. It usually takes at least six months before you can see the effects of spironolactone. You should understand that spironolactone only helps prevent new hairs from growing. It does not kill the hairs already present. After six months of using spironolactone, you may need to have any remaining hairs removed by electrolysis.

### How to Begin Treatment

Generic spironolactone is available in 25 mg tablets (brand name Aldactone® is available in 25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg tablets). To start treatment, take one 25 mg tablet daily for one week, and then two tablets daily for one week, and then three tablets daily for one week and then four tablets daily from the fourth week on. The goal intake is 100 mg daily. Following this schedule will help reduce any side effects of spironolactone.

### Side Effects

In general, the side effects of spironolactone are few and mild. Spirolactone is also a mild diuretic. It is sometimes used in the treatment of high blood pressure. The most common side effect is frequent urination for the first two to three weeks. Your body will then become accustomed to the medication. You should not have any other problems. Women who are taking potassium-saving diuretics (e.g., Dyazide®) may experience a rise in their potassium levels. This is an electrolyte in the blood. If you are taking

blood pressure medication, as well as spironolactone, you should have your potassium checked after one to two months. The drop in blood pressure may cause you to experience fatigue and faintness. Drink plenty of water.

Other common side effects are nausea, heartburn and upset stomach. It is best to take spironolactone with meals. Other possible side effects are mild uterine cramping and diarrhea. You can also have some drowsiness and increased skin sensitivity to the sun. If your cycles are usually regular now, they may become irregular with spironolactone. Alternatively, if your cycles are now not regular, they may become more regular with this medication.

This drug should not be used without an adequate form of birth control. It can cause birth defects (principally feminization of a male fetus) if a woman conceives when she is taking this medication.

Allergic reactions, such as rash or itching, can also occur.

If you experience any problems or have any questions, please contact our office.

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