

Potassium chloride for low potassium levels



This leaflet is for parents and carers about how to use this medicine in children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adults. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

If you have been given effervescent tablets, make sure you understand how to dissolve the tablets in water and how much to give your child.

The packaging for different effervescent tablets look similar, so check you are giving the right one.

Name of medicine

Potassium chloride

Brand names: Sando-K (effervescent tablets); Kay-Cell-L (liquid medicine); Slow-K (modified-release tablets)

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Potassium is important for the heart, nerves and muscles to work properly. Your child may have low potassium levels because they have too little in their diet (e.g. premature babies) or because they have lost potassium because of illness or kidney problems. Potassium chloride will help to keep your children's potassium at a normal level.

What is potassium chloride available as?

- **Effervescent (fizzy) tablets (Sando-K):** Each tablet contains 470 mg (12 mmol) of potassium
- **Modified-release (Slow-K) tablets:** Each tablet contains 600 mg (8 mmol) potassium
- **Liquid medicine:** Each mL contains 1 mmol potassium

When should I give potassium chloride?

Potassium chloride is usually given **twice** each day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Ideally, these times are 10–12 hours apart, for example sometime between 7 and 8 am, and between 7 and 8 pm.

Give the medicine at about the same time(s) each day so that this becomes part of your child's daily routine, which will help you to remember.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of medicine (the dose) that is right for your child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.



It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.

How should I give it?



Effervescent (Sando-K) tablets: You will need to dissolve the tablet in water and give your child some or all of this mixture. Detailed instructions on how to do this are provided on the back page of this leaflet. This information is also available in [a leaflet](#) on our website.



Modified-release (Slow-K) tablets: these should be taken with, or just after, a meal. The tablets should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water or juice. Your child should stay upright for 20–30 minutes after taking the tablet. Your child should not chew the tablets.



Liquid medicine (Kay-Cell-L): Measure out the right amount using an oral syringe or medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When should the medicine start to work?

The medicine will start to work straight away but you may not see any difference in your child.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of potassium chloride, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of potassium chloride, you do not need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.
- If your child is sick again, seek advice from your doctor, pharmacist or hospital. They will decide what to do based on your child's condition and the medicine involved.

What if I forget to give it?

If you remember up to 4 hours after you should have given a dose, give your child the missed dose. For example, if you usually give a dose at about 7 am, you can give the missed dose at any time up to 11 am. If you remember after that time, do not give the missed dose. Just give the next dose as normal.



Never give a double dose of potassium chloride.

What if I think I have given too much?



It may be dangerous to give too much potassium chloride.

If you are concerned that you may have given too much, contact your doctor or local NHS services (details at end of leaflet). Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they cause effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects you must do something about



If your child gets bad stomach pain, brings up (vomits) blood or their stools (poo) are very dark, contact your doctor or take your child to hospital straight away, as they may have an ulcer.

Other side-effects you need to know about

Your child may have nausea (feel sick) or vomit (be sick), or have abdominal cramps, diarrhoea or flatulence (wind) when taking potassium chloride. Giving the medicine with some food may help. If the problem persists, contact your child's doctor.

There may sometimes be other side-effects that are not listed above. If you notice anything unusual and are concerned, contact your doctor. You can report any suspected side-effects to a UK safety scheme at mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard.

More information on side-effects can be found in a [leaflet](#) on our website.

Can other medicines be given at the same time as potassium chloride?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Potassium chloride should not be taken with some medicines that you get on prescription. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medicines your child is taking before giving potassium chloride.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal and complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- Your child's blood will be tested regularly to check that the levels of potassium are correct. It is vital that your child has these blood tests, because they may become unwell if their potassium levels are too high or too low.
- Your doctor may change the amount of potassium chloride to give your child depending on the result of a blood test. Check how much to give each time you get a new prescription. If you are not sure, check with your doctor.

- The packaging for some phosphate and potassium effervescent tablets looks similar. If your child has more than one effervescent medicine, make sure you are giving the right medicine at the right time.
- If your child is taking effervescent tablets, make sure you understand how to dissolve the tablets in water and how much to give your child. If you are not sure, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for help.

General advice about medicines

- Try to give medicines at about the same times each day, to help you remember.
- If you are not sure a medicine is working, contact your doctor but continue to give the medicine as usual in the meantime. Do not give extra doses, as you may do harm.
- Only give this medicine to your child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.
- If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact a doctor straight away.
- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine you have at home has not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about potassium chloride and about other medicines used to treat low potassium levels.

You can also get useful information from:

England: NHS 111

Tel 111 nhs.uk

Scotland: NHS 24

Tel 111 nhs24.scot

Wales: NHS 111 Wales

Tel 111 111.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland: NI Direct

nidirect.gov.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

How to give calcium, phosphate or potassium using effervescent tablets




Children may need extra calcium, phosphate or potassium for a variety of reasons. If liquid medicine is available, you may need to make a mixture by dispersing (dissolving) an effervescent tablet in water and giving your child some of this mixture. This leaflet explains how to do this.

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will tell you:

- how many tablets to use
- the amount of water to disperse the tablet(s) in, written in millilitres or mL
- the amount (dose) to give your child, in mL.

The information will be shown on the medicine label. You may also want to complete the table below for reference (or ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to complete it for you).

Name of medicine	
Number of tablets to dissolve in water	
Amount of water to dissolve the tablet(s) in	mL
Amount to give your child mL

 Different brands of phosphate, calcium and potassium are available. Each time you get a new prescription, check how to make the mixture and how much to give.

Items you will need

You will need the following items to prepare the mixture (your pharmacist should provide these):

- the effervescent tablets
- some water in a glass or cup
- a small mixing pot or glass
- two syringes: a larger oral syringe (usually 20 mL) for measuring water, and a smaller oral syringe to measure the dose if your child needs only a small amount of the mixture (the purple box explains what size to use)

How to prepare and give the mixture

- Use the larger syringe to draw up the required amount of water into the larger syringe. The grey box explains how to do this. This volume is usually between 10 and 20 mL, drawn into a 20 mL syringe.
- Gently squirt this water into your mixing pot or glass. If you spill any, start again.
- Add the tablet(s) to the water. It will fizz as it dissolves.
- Once the fizzing has stopped (this usually takes about 5 minutes), stir the mixture with the smaller syringe. The mixture will be cloudy.

- Draw up the amount of mixture your child needs into the appropriate-sized syringe. The purple box gives some guidelines.
- Gently squirt the liquid in the syringe into your child's mouth.
- Pour any leftover mixture into a paper towel and put it in the bin. Do not pour it down the sink or keep it for later.
- Rinse out the mixing pot and syringes (draw water into syringe and squirt it out two or three times).

What if I make a mistake?

If you make a mistake while preparing the mixture, throw the mixture away and start again.

What if I give the wrong amount?

You are unlikely to do harm if you give the wrong amount occasionally. Make a note of what you did when making and giving the mixture, then contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice.

How to draw up liquid into an oral syringe

- Put the tip of the syringe into the liquid.
- Hold the barrel of the syringe and pull up the plunger.
- Draw up more liquid than you need.
- Remove the syringe from the glass, and turn it upside down, so that the tip is upwards.
- Gently push in the plunger to squirt out any air bubbles (which should rise to the top) and liquid so that the top of the plunger is level with the right mark on the syringe.
- You may want to practise using the syringe by drawing up water and squirting it out again.
- Make sure you know how to read the scale on the side of the syringe.

You can read about how to use an oral syringe [here](#).

Which syringe should I use?

You need to use a syringe that is close to the amount of mixture you are to give your child so that the measurement is as accurate as possible. These are some guidelines:

- If the amount is less than 1 mL, use a 1 mL syringe.
- If the amount is more than 1 mL but no more than 5 mL, use a 5mL syringe.
- If the amount is more than 5 mL but no more than 10 mL, use a 10 mL syringe.
- If the amount is more than 10 mL, use a 20 mL syringe.

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk