



Erythromycin for bacterial infections

This leaflet is about the use of the antibiotic erythromycin for the treatment of bacterial infections.

This leaflet has been written specifically for parents and carers about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

If your child has ever had a reaction to any antibiotic, check with your doctor that your child can have erythromycin **before** giving it.

Name of drug

Erythromycin

Common brands: Erymax®, Erythrocin®, Erythroped®, Erythroped A®, Tiloryth®, Primacine®

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

It is important that your child takes this medicine in the way that your doctor has told you to so that it kills the harmful bacteria and gets rid of their infection.

What is erythromycin available as?


- **Tablets:** 250 mg and 500 mg
- **Capsules:** 250 mg
- **Liquid medicine (suspension):** 125 mg, 250 mg or 500 mg in 5 mL. These may contain sugar; you can ask your pharmacist for a sugar-free medicine.

When should I give erythromycin?

Erythromycin is usually given **four times a day**. This is usually first thing in the morning (before breakfast), at about midday (before lunch), late in the afternoon (before tea) and at bedtime. Ideally, these times should be at least 3 hours apart.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of erythromycin (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?

This medicine works best when the stomach is empty, so try to give it to your child about an hour before they eat. However, if your child has an upset stomach, you can give it with a small amount of food.




Tablets should be swallowed with a glass of water, milk or juice. Your child should not chew the tablet.



Capsules should be swallowed whole with a glass of water or milk. Your child should not chew the capsules.



Liquid medicine: Shake the medicine well. Measure out the right amount using an oral syringe or a medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount. You can also dilute the right amount of medicine (measured with a spoon) in a small amount of water or milk. Make sure your child takes it all straight away.

 It is important that you give your child the whole dose each time.

When should the medicine start working?


Your child should start to get better after taking the medicine for 2 days. It is important that they **take the whole course** of the medicine that has been prescribed. **Do not stop early.**

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of erythromycin, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of erythromycin, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

What if I forget to give it?

- If you miss a dose, wait until the next normal dose. Do not give the missed dose.
- If you forget to give the dose before your child has eaten, but remember during the meal, give them the dose straight after finishing the meal.

 **Never give a double dose of erythromycin.**


What if I give too much?

Erythromycin is normally a safe drug. It is unlikely to cause any problems if you give an extra dose by mistake. If you think you may have given your child too much, contact your doctor or contact your doctor or local NHS services (111 in England and Scotland; 0845 4647 in Wales). 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 have other effects that we don't want (side-effects). Side-effects are rare with erythromycin and do not usually last for long. They will get better after a day or two as your child's body gets used to the medicine, and should go away when the treatment course is finished.

Side-effects you must do something about

 If your child gets a skin rash or itching, has problems breathing or seems short of breath or is wheezing, or if their face, throat, lips or tongue start to swell, they may be allergic to erythromycin. Take them to hospital or call an ambulance **straight away**.

Important things to know about taking antibiotics

- It is important that your child **completes the course** of antibiotic. This means that they must take the medicine for the number of days that the doctor has told you to, or until all of the medicine has been taken. If you stop giving the antibiotic too soon, the bacteria that are left will start to multiply again, and may cause another infection. There is also a risk that these bacteria will be 'resistant' to the first antibiotic. This means that it might not work next time, and your child might need a different antibiotic, which might not work as well or cause more side-effects.
- Children are sometimes sick (vomit) or get diarrhoea when taking antibiotics. Encourage them to drink water to replace the fluid they have lost.
- **Do not** give your child any medicine to stop the diarrhoea unless your doctor has told you to.

- Try to give the medicine at about the same times each day, to help you remember, and to make sure that there is the right amount of medicine in your child's body to kill the bacteria.
- Only give this medicine to your child for their current infection.
- **Never save** medicine for future illnesses. Give old or unused antibiotics to your pharmacist to dispose of.
- Only give the antibiotic to the child for whom it was prescribed. 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 your doctor for advice.

- Antibiotics only kill bacteria; they do not kill viruses. This means that they do not work against colds, sore throats, flu or other infections that are caused by viruses. Your doctor will not prescribe antibiotics for these illnesses.

Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child will probably get diarrhoea when they first start taking erythromycin and they may get stomach pains and feel sick or be sick (vomit). The box above gives advice on what to do.
- Contact your doctor if your child has diarrhoea that goes on for more than 4 days or if it is severe and watery, or contains blood.
- Your child may have a mild skin rash or itching. Girls may have some itching around the vagina.
- Your child may feel dizzy, have a headache or feel tired.

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 <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard>.

Can other medicines be given at the same time as erythromycin?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Erythromycin should not be taken with some common drugs that you get on prescription. If your child is taking any other medicines, tell your doctor and pharmacist.
- Do not give any medicine that contains an antihistamine (used to treat hay fever and other allergies, and in some medicines for colds and fever) without checking with your doctor or pharmacist, as erythromycin can make the side-effects of these medicines worse.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about erythromycin?



You must tell your doctor if your child has ever had an allergic reaction or other reaction to any medicine they have been given before. If you have forgotten to tell your doctor, check with the doctor or pharmacist before giving erythromycin to your child.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep this medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight.
- You may need to keep liquid medicine in the fridge – check the instructions on the bottle. Make sure the medicine does not freeze.
- 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 child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about erythromycin and about other medicines used to treat infections.

You can also get useful information from:

England

NHS 111: 111 - www.nhs.uk

Scotland

NHS 24: 111 - www.nhs24.com

Wales/Galw Lechyd Cymru

NHS Direct: 0845 4647 - www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland

NI Direct: www.nidirect.gov.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.