

Amoxicillin (Amoxil, Trimox)

What is amoxicillin? This drug is an antibiotic which kills bacteria and clears up infection within the body.

What is it used for? Amoxicillin is used for many different bacterial infections. When used with other drugs it can cure the stomach infection called *Helicobacter pylori* gastritis.

How do I take it? Follow your physician's instructions carefully. Amoxicillin can be taken with or without food. It is important to complete the full course of therapy. The capsule may be opened and the contents sprinkled on soft food to make it easier to swallow. If using the liquid be sure to shake well before each dose and keep in the refrigerator. Discard any unused liquid after 14 days. Keep in a tightly sealed container. Keep all medications away from children. Never share your medications with anyone else.

What do I do for a missed dose? Antibiotics work best when there is a steady blood level. Therefore, it is necessary to take the drug at evenly spaced intervals and to avoid missing doses. If you should miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose and you take 2 doses a day, take the one you missed and the next dose 5 to 6 hours later. If you take 3 or more doses a day, take the one you missed and the next dose 2 to 4 hours later. Then return to your regular schedule.

Are there interactions with food or beverages? There are no known food or beverage interactions. Amoxicillin may be taken with milk, fruit juices or carbonated drinks.

Are there interactions with other drugs? An interaction generally means that one drug may increase or decrease the effect of another drug. Also, the more medications a person takes, the more likely there will be a drug interaction. Interactions with this drug may occur with the following:

- allopurinol (Zyloprim)
- atenolol (Tenormin)
- probenecid
- antacids
- birth control pills
- other antibiotics

Is there a problem if I have another disorder or disease? At times, a drug may have a different or enhanced effect when other diseases are present. At other times, the drug may worsen or affect another disease. There are generally no problems when using this antibiotic with other medical conditions.

What about allergies? People who have known allergies or asthma may be at an increased risk for a reaction from any new medication. Signs of an allergic reaction are skin rash, hives, itching, severe diarrhea, shortness of breath or wheezing. Of course, a person should not take amoxicillin if there has been a previous reaction to this or a similar drug such as penicillin or cephalosporin (Ceftin, Keflex) type antibiotics.

What if I'm pregnant, considering pregnancy or breast-feeding? Any drug taken during pregnancy is potentially dangerous to a fetus. The FDA has a grading system for each drug which reflects what is known medically. Amoxicillin is ranked B. This means it is not expected to be harmful to an unborn baby. Amoxicillin passes into breast milk. Rarely, amoxicillin may cause a yeast infection, diarrhea, or allergic reaction in a nursing infant, although no serious harm is expected. Always consult the physician before taking any drug during or when planning pregnancy or during breast feeding.

What are the effects on sexual function? Amoxicillin may decrease the effects of oral contraceptives in some women so an additional form of birth control may be necessary.

Are there other precautions? The use of antibiotics, especially prolonged or repeated use, may result in other bacterial or fungal infection. These are usually due to yeast organisms and occur in the mouth, intestinal tract, rectum or vagina.

How long is it safe to take amoxicillin?

Generally, amoxicillin can be taken for prolonged periods. However, the drug does reduce or change the normal beneficial bacteria in the colon. Prolonged use should be undertaken only under a physician's care.

How about side effects? Adverse reactions can occur with any drug, even over-the-counter medications. Some of these are mild such as a stomach upset, which may be avoided by taking the medication with food. Minor reactions may go away on their own but if they persist, contact the physician. For major reactions, the patient should contact the physician immediately. For amoxicillin, the following are the observed side effects:

Minor:

Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, rash, hives, itching

Major:

Difficult breathing, wheezing, severe diarrhea, weakness, fever, severe sore throat, abnormal bleeding or bruising