

# SPIRONOLACTONE

Spironolactone is a unique medication which was originally created as a “diuretic” – in other words, it’s something that certain patients would take in order to help their body shed excess water. Holding on to too much fluid can be a problem for those with high blood pressure, so that was the original group for whom the medication was prescribed. An interesting “side effect” of the medication was found in that it blocks the effect of hormones on the skin and other tissues. Since hormonal influence on the oil glands is at the heart of the problem of those with acne, Spironolactone has been found to be very effective in reducing the number and intensity of acne flares. Because of the unique way in which it works, a few issues must be taken into consideration.

First, although the amount needed for treatment of acne is far less than the typical amount used for those with high blood pressure, we would need to proceed cautiously in those who are known to routinely have “low blood pressure”. If this pertains to you, please let us know.

Secondly, the method by which Spironolactone helps our body get rid of “excess water” is by making our kidneys get rid of excess salt. If you’ve ever noticed that after eating a lot of really salty food that you tend to feel more “bloated”, then you’ve experienced how excess salt in your system can make your body hold on to water. What happens, though, is our body wants to hold on to some version of salt no matter what, and the two main types of salt our body recognizes are “sodium” and “potassium”. Since Spironolactone makes our kidneys get rid of excess sodium, our body in response then tries to hold on to the potassium it has.

Therefore, the testing involved for those on Spironolactone first has to do with making sure your kidneys are working fine, and also that you have normal potassium levels in your blood. A final concern is to make sure you aren’t pregnant while on this medication. Spironolactone does not create “birth defects” in the manner that we normally think of. Instead, because it can block hormones, it can interfere with the development of the male fetus. In other words, if you were to take Spironolactone while pregnant with a baby boy, you could run the risk that his “baby boy parts” wouldn’t fully develop. So for females who have the potential to become pregnant, pregnancy testing will also become part of the routine bloodwork. So far as side effects, it’s important to remember that the overwhelming majority of people who take Spironolactone don’t experience any noticeable side effects at all. If side effects were to occur, the most commonly reported would include endocrine abnormalities, including decreased libido, and menstrual irregularities, gastric disturbances, such as gastritis and peptic ulcer, and central nervous system effects, such as lethargy (tiredness) and confusion. Don’t take potassium supplementation while on Spironolactone. Because it is a diuretic, just remember to drink plenty of fluids. You may find that you go the bathroom (urinate) a little more often. The complete range of potential side effects is far beyond what we can provide in this handout and instead will be available through the package insert from the pharmacy when you pick up your medication. If you have any further questions, don’t hesitate to ask us or your pharmacist.

## Today you may be receiving one or two lab slips:

The 1st lab slip is for:

- BUN/Creatinine
- Potassium
- Serum Pregnancy Test

The 2nd lab slip is for:

- BUN/Creatinine
- Potassium
- Serum Pregnancy Test

Please have the 1st blood test performed:

- Immediately
- 5-7 days prior to your next office visit
- In \_\_\_ weeks

Please have the 2nd blood test performed:

- Immediately
- 5-7 days prior to your next office visit
- In \_\_\_ weeks