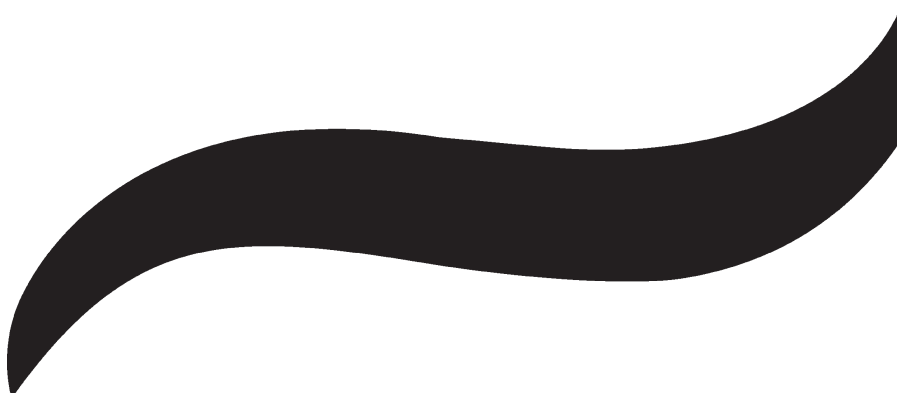




# Information for the Dermatology Isotretinoin Clinic

Information for patients



You have been referred to us so that we can assess your skin to see if you need stronger treatments for your acne.

## **WHAT IS ACNE?**

Acne vulgaris is a common skin condition which causes inflammation. It affects the hair follicle (tiny hole where your hair grows from) and sebaceous (oily) gland next to it.

It is most common on the face, back and chest. It affects males and females of all races and ethnicities.

## WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS FOR ACNE?

If you only have a few spots, you can treat your acne with over-the-counter gels or creams (topical treatments). If these treatments have not worked or your acne is more severe, you might need prescription medicine.

Your GP surgery can give you a range of different treatments. These include creams or gels if your acne is mild. You might also need antibiotic tablets if these treatments are not enough.

You should usually have been prescribed at least 2 different types of antibiotic tablets before you get referred to our clinic. You should have taken them for at least 6 months. There might be times that you need to be referred to us sooner than this.

If you are a woman of child bearing age, you may also be offered either the combined oral contraceptive pill, or co-cyprindiol (Dianette®). You must have been on contraception for 4 weeks before isotretinoin can be started. Please speak to your GP to determine the best contraception option for you.

## WHAT IS ISOTRETINOIN?

Isotretinoin is a medication prescribed by dermatologists to treat severe acne. It can also be used for other skin conditions such as rosacea. We usually consider this if other treatments have not improved your skin, or if you have severe acne with signs of scarring.

This leaflet gives you some information on isotretinoin, including common risks and precautions.

For more detailed information, we recommend you read the British Association of Dermatologists Patient Guide before coming to your appointment. You can find this by scanning the QR code below using the camera on your smartphone or other device. You can also go to this link:

**<https://www.bad.org.uk/pils/isotretinoin/>**



If you are under 18 years old, you can read the separate information leaflet about isotretinoin written especially for young people – Medicines for Children ‘Oral Isotretinoin guide for young people’ found at:

**<https://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/medicines/isotretinoin-guide-for-young-people/>**



You can ask any questions you may have in clinic. You can also speak to us about what other treatments are available.

## HOW DOES IT WORK AND HOW DO I TAKE IT?

Isotretinoin works by reducing how much sebum (oil) your skin produces. It is usually prescribed as a once daily regimen for 16 weeks. This may depend on how you respond to treatment. The treatment is to be taken with food such as your evening meal. This helps it absorb and work better.

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS?

You will be given a detailed patient information leaflet when you come to the clinic if you have not read one before your appointment.

Your skin will produce less sebum, so you will probably have dryness of your skin, lips and nose. Dryness of the inside of your nose (nasal mucosa) can sometimes cause nose bleeds. Use a simple moisturiser on your skin and Vaseline on your lips/nose to help.

You will be more prone to sunburn during this treatment. You should avoid sunbathing, seek shade, use a high factor sunscreen, and cover up if you are outside.

Some patients may find their acne gets worse at the beginning of their treatment. This usually settles within 1-2 weeks of starting treatment.

Other side effects may include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Mood changes (uncommon)
- Sexual dysfunction (we don't know how often this happens)

## **BLOOD TESTS**

Before starting isotretinoin, you will need to have a blood test. This checks your full blood count, lipids (cholesterol), glucose, kidney and liver function. It is very helpful if these are done at your local surgery before your appointment.

You will have blood tests before your treatment and once more after it has started. We may want to do them again if your treatment goes on for longer than 16 weeks.

## **CONTRACEPTION**

### **Information for female patients of child bearing potential (aged 12-55)**

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Isotretinoin can cause severe foetal (unborn baby) malformations and deformities. At each appointment, you will be asked to provide a urine sample for a pregnancy test.

National guidance advises that women of childbearing age should be on contraception for 1 month before starting isotretinoin. This should continue for 5 weeks after treatment has finished. Options to consider are: the oral contraceptive pill; injection; intra-uterine methods (coil); implant. We may also advise you use barrier methods such as condoms at the same time depending on your other contraception.

If there is no chance of you falling pregnant during your isotretinoin treatment and 1 month afterwards due to specific reasons, you may be able to opt out of contraception. We will discuss this with you at your appointment. We will ask you to sign an acknowledgement of risk form.

## FOLLOW-UP CLINIC APPOINTMENTS

You should be seen within 4 – 6 weeks after you start treatment. Appointments after this will vary depending on our assessment of your case and pregnancy risk.

### **Further Information**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/>

<https://www.lanarkshiresexualhealth.org/>

<http://www.NHS.uk/conditions/acne/>

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE USE OF PATIENT INFORMATION

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