

## **Tetracyclines**

### **What are tetracyclines?**

Tetracyclines are a class of antibiotics (including tetracycline, doxycycline and minocycline) which are used to treat skin infections. Because of their anti-inflammatory properties, they are also used to treat a range of certain skin conditions including acne, rosacea, periorificial dermatitis and bullous pemphigoid.

### **What precautions are needed when taking tetracyclines?**

Tetracyclines should be avoided in cases of:

Allergy to this medication

Pregnancy

Breast-feeding

Those under 8 years of age

Severe liver and kidney disease

Lupus.

Tetracyclines also interact with medications including:

Retinoids: isotretinoin, acitretin

Vitamin A

Oral contraceptives (tetracyclines may reduce effectiveness of the pill)

Warfarin (a blood thinner)

Other drug interactions are possible and it is important to check with your doctor prior to taking any new medications.

One should avoid iron supplements or antacids containing aluminium, calcium or zinc since these can reduce the effectiveness of tetracyclines. It is important to take the medication with a big glass of water, and to stay upright for 30 minutes after dosing to avoid irritation to the food pipe (oesophagus).

### **What monitoring is required when taking tetracyclines?**

Blood test monitoring is not usually required. Liver function tests may be needed in some cases, depending on the individual's medical history.

### **What to expect while taking tetracyclines and possible side effects**

Most people tolerate this medication well but there are some uncommon side effects including:

Gastric upset causing nausea, vomiting or feeling of abdominal burning

Greater risk of sunburn

Oral or vaginal thrush

Yellowing of the teeth in people less than 8 years of age

Headaches

Skin rash

Dizziness

Skin darkening with long-term use

Tetracyclines can cause a severe allergic reaction or inflammation of the liver in extremely rare cases.