

# DERMATOLOGY

— & Skin Health —

## Spirolactone

### What is Spirolactone and how do I take it?

- Spirolactone is a diuretic (water pill) that is used to treat acne due to its antiandrogen (anti-testosterone) effects.
- Spirolactone is not approved by the FDA for treatment of acne, although it is commonly used in women for this purpose.
- Spirolactone works most effectively when it is taken every day as prescribed. Everyone misses a dose occasionally, but missing many doses or starting and stopping the medication will affect its efficacy.
- Spirolactone often takes several months to work; try to be patient.
- Spirolactone usually does not cause stomach upset, but if it does it can be taken with food.
- **Spirolactone should not be taken if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant.** It can affect the development of a male fetus's genitalia. Spirolactone should also not be taken if you are breastfeeding.

### What about side effects?

- Spirolactone is usually well tolerated, but just as with any medication, side effects are possible. **Common side effects include** irregular menses, midcycle spotting, breast tenderness, and headaches. **Very rarely,** Spirolactone can cause a rash, liver, kidney or blood problems. Questions have been raised about whether this drug can cause breast cancer or thyroid cancer; to date, no link has been shown. It is known that the drug can stimulate breast tissue, and can cause gynecomastia in men; because of this it is not recommended in women with an immediate family history of breast cancer.
- Although Spirolactone is a diuretic, (water pill), it is a very weak one, and most patients do not notice a significant increase in urination.
- Spirolactone can increase the level of potassium in your bloodstream. This is generally only an issue for people with kidney disease, but some people suggest avoiding salt substitutes that contain potassium while taking Spirolactone.
- **You should stop taking Spirolactone and call the office if any of the following occur:** a sudden severe rash, severe or daily headaches, vomiting, severe abdominal pain, visual changes, unusual bleeding or bruising or jaundice (yellowing of eyes and skin).