

NITROFURANTOIN

Nitrofurantoin is an antibiotic used to treat bacterial infections.
It will not work against viral infections such as colds or flu.

Reason for antibiotic:	
Planned duration:	
My doctor's name:	
Doctor's contact details:	

How do I take nitrofurantoin?

- Nitrofurantoin works best if it is swallowed whole and **taken with food or milk**. This helps to reduce nausea and to improve absorption of this medicine in the body.

What do I need to be aware of before I take nitrofurantoin?

- Discuss any **pre-existing medical conditions** with your doctor, especially kidney disease or G6PD deficiency (a genetic deficiency in a particular enzyme; discuss with your doctor if unsure).
- Discuss **other medicines you are currently taking or plan to start taking** (including herbal and over-the-counter medicines) with your doctor and/or pharmacist. This is to ensure nitrofurantoin is safe to take together with your current medicines.
- Pregnancy:** Nitrofurantoin is safe to use during pregnancy. However, an alternative antibiotic option is preferred during the last 4 weeks of pregnancy. Discuss with your doctor if unsure.
- Breastfeeding:** Nitrofurantoin is considered safe in breastfeeding, provided the infant is 4 or more weeks old (> 4 weeks old) and does not have G6PD deficiency (discuss your doctor if unsure).

The information contained in this brochure is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a doctor or health care professional. Ask your pharmacist or doctor if you have any additional questions or would like more detailed information about this medicine. **Last reviewed:** 30th October 2023 | **Next review** by November 2026.

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Common side effects of nitrofurantoin:

- **Nausea and vomiting;** usually mild and improves over a few days.
- **Diarrhoea;** usually improves over a few days. If diarrhoea occurs, avoid anti-diarrhoeal medicines such as loperamide (the active ingredient in Imodium® or Gastro-Stop®), unless advised by your doctor. See your doctor if you have frequent and watery diarrhoea.
- **Drowsiness or dizziness;** do not drive or operate machinery if affected. Drinking alcohol may worsen these effects.
- **Brown discolouration of urine;** this is temporary and is not associated with any serious effects.

Rare reactions and/or side effects of nitrofurantoin to be aware of:

- **Allergic reactions** such as a rash, itch, blisters or red skin spots; stop taking this medicine and see your doctor.
- **Signs of a serious allergic reaction**, such as difficulty breathing or swelling of the face, eyes or lips; call for an ambulance immediately OR present to the accident and emergency department at your nearest hospital immediately.

There are some other rare side effects that are possible if people are taking this medicine for a very long time (months):

- **Numbness, tingling, pain or weakness in hands or feet;** if this occurs, stop taking this medicine and see your doctor. This is more likely with high dose or long treatment courses.
- **Effect on the lungs;** this may cause difficulty breathing and/or cough (sometimes a skin rash may appear). Your doctor may need to do tests to work out if this is caused by nitrofurantoin.
- **Changes in liver function;** signs of liver problems include loss of appetite, severe nausea or vomiting, dark urine, pale stools and yellowing of the eyes or skin. During prolonged treatment, your doctor may request a blood test to check your liver function.
- **Reduced blood cells in your body;** signs include unexplained tiredness, shortness of breath when exercising, dizziness, bleeding or bruising or looking pale. During prolonged treatment (for example, longer than 2 weeks), your doctor may request a blood test to check the number of blood cells in your body.