



Digoxin: Information for families

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) describes how this medicine is given and some of its possible side effects. Each person reacts differently to medicines, so your child will not necessarily experience every side effect mentioned. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist or telephone one of the contact numbers of this information sheet.

What is it for?

Digoxin is a medicine used when the heart does not pump properly. It is also used to treat some abnormal heart rhythms.

Digoxin has a direct action on the heart to increase the pumping action, and to control some fast heart rhythms.

- Confusion, anxiety, mental disturbances or disorientation
- Visual disturbances including blurred or double vision, halo or green/yellow tinge to vision.

If any of these occur please tell us. We may want to take a blood test to check the amount of digoxin in the blood.

If you are concerned about any of these side effects, please discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

How is it given?

It is usually given once or twice a day. It is available as 50 micrograms in 1ml oral liquid. An oral syringe is provided to measure small doses.

For older children, tablets are available in the following strengths: 62.5 micrograms, 125 micrograms and 250 micrograms.

What are the side-effects?

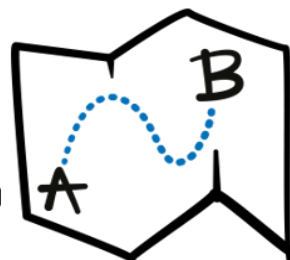
Side effects are rare, but occasionally can include:

- Either a slow or a fast heart rate
- Feeling sick, vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Skin rashes
- Headache
- Dizziness

Who should not take digoxin (contraindications)?

People with the following conditions should discuss taking digoxin with their doctor:

- Pregnant, could be pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding
- Kidney disease
- Overactive or underactive thyroid function



Digoxin and other medications

Some medicines can interact with digoxin. **Always check with your prescriber or pharmacist before giving your child any other medicines, including herbal or complementary medicines.**

The following are known to react with digoxin:

- Amiodarone, beta-blockers, verapamil, diltiazem and other anti-arrhythmic drugs: Sometimes these are prescribed alongside digoxin. They also slow the heart rate and can have an additional effect.
- Furosemide, amiloride, spironolactone, ACE inhibitors, and potassium supplements: These are commonly prescribed alongside digoxin. They alter the level of potassium in the body and can affect how the heart responds to digoxin. A blood test can show if the potassium level is in the right range
- Antibiotics called macrolides such as erythromycin and clarithromycin can increase the level of digoxin in the body
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as diclofenac and ibuprofen may increase the level of digoxin in the body

- St John's Wort: may decrease the effectiveness of digoxin

Important

- Keep medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.
- Keep medicines in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight and away from heat.
- If your doctor decides to stop treatment with digoxin, return any unused medicine to your pharmacist. Do not flush medicines down the toilet or throw them away.
- If you forget to give your child a dose, give it as soon as you remember. Do not give a double dose if it is already time to give the next one.
- If your child vomits after taking the medicine, do not give a double dose.
- Your family doctor (GP) will need to give you a repeat prescription for digoxin.
- Some medicines will need to be ordered by your local pharmacist- ask your GP for another prescription with enough time (when you have about 2 weeks left of medicine) to make sure you do not run out.

For further information please contact:

Medicines Information: 020 7829 8608 or via the Medications page on the MyGOSH app (available Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Cardiology team via GOSH switchboard: 020 7405 9200 or via the MyGOSH app

Disclaimer

Please read this information sheet from GOSH alongside the patient information leaflet (PIL) provided by the manufacturer. If you do not have a copy of the manufacturer's patient information leaflet please talk to your pharmacist. A few products do not have a marketing authorisation (licence) as a medicine and therefore there is no PIL.

For children, there may be conflicts of information between the manufacturer's patient information leaflet (PIL) and guidance provided by GOSH and other healthcare providers. For example, some manufacturers may recommend, in the patient information leaflet, that a medicine is not given to children aged under 12 years. In most cases, this is because the manufacturer will recruit adults to clinical trials in the first instance and therefore the initial marketing authorisation (licence) only covers adults and older children.

For new medicines, the manufacturer then has to recruit children and newborns into trials (unless the medicine is not going to be used in children and newborns) and subsequently amend the PIL with the approved information. Older medicines may have been used effectively for many years in children without problems but the manufacturer has not been required to collect data and amend the licence. This does not mean that it is unsafe for children and young people to be prescribed such a medicine 'off-licence/off-label'. However, if you are concerned about any conflicts of information, please discuss with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

