

## Albuterol (al byoo' ter ole)

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### Why is this medication prescribed?

Albuterol is used to prevent and treat wheezing, difficulty breathing and chest tightness caused by lung diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD; a group of diseases that affect the lungs and airways). Albuterol is in a class of medications called bronchodilators. It works by relaxing and opening the air passages to the lungs to make breathing easier.

### How should this medicine be used?

Albuterol comes as a tablet, a syrup, and an extended-release (long-acting) tablet to take by mouth. The tablets and syrup are usually taken three or four times a day. The extended-release tablets are usually taken once every 12 hours. Take albuterol at around the same times every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take albuterol exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.

Swallow the extended-release tablets whole with plenty of water or other liquid. Do not split, chew, or crush them.

Your doctor may start you on a low dose of albuterol and gradually increase your dose.

Albuterol may help control your symptoms but will not cure your condition. Continue to take albuterol even if you feel well. Do not stop taking albuterol without talking to your doctor.

Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen or if you feel that albuterol no longer controls your symptoms.

### Other uses for this medicine

This medication may be prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

### What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking albuterol,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to albuterol, any other medications, or any of the ingredients in albuterol tablets, extended-release tablets, or capsules. Ask your pharmacist for a list of the ingredients.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and nonprescription medications, vitamins, nutritional supplements, and herbal products you are taking or plan to take. Be sure to mention any of the following: beta blockers such as atenolol (Tenormin), labetalol (Normodyne), metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL), nadolol (Corgard), and propranolol (Inderal); digoxin (Lanoxin); diuretics ('water pills'); epinephrine (Epipen,

Primatene Mist); other oral and inhaled medications for asthma and medications for colds. Also tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking the following medications or have stopped taking them within the past two weeks: antidepressants such as amitriptyline (Elavil), amoxapine (Asendin), clomipramine (Anafranil), desipramine (Norpramin), doxepin (Adapin, Sinequan), imipramine (Tofranil), nortriptyline (Aventyl, Pamelor), protriptyline (Vivactil), and trimipramine (Surmontil); and monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors, including isocarboxazid (Marplan), phenelzine (Nardil), selegiline (Eldepryl, Emsam, Zelapar), and tranylcypromine (Parnate). Your doctor may need to change the doses of your medications or monitor you carefully for side effects.

- tell your doctor if you have or have ever had an irregular heartbeat, heart disease, high blood pressure, hyperthyroidism (condition in which there is too much thyroid hormone in the body), diabetes, or seizures.
- tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. If you become pregnant while taking albuterol, call your doctor.
- you should know that albuterol sometimes causes wheezing and difficulty breathing. If this happens, call your doctor right away. Do not use albuterol again unless your doctor tells you that you should.

### **What special dietary instructions should I follow?**

Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, continue your normal diet.

### **What should I do if I forget a dose?**

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

### **What side effects can this medication cause?**

Albuterol may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- nervousness
- shakiness
- dizziness
- headache
- uncontrollable shaking of a part of the body
- muscle cramps
- excessive motion or activity
- sudden changes in mood
- nosebleed
- nausea
- increased or decreased appetite
- difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- pale skin

Some side effects can be serious. If you experience any of these symptoms, call your doctor immediately:

- fast, pounding, or irregular heartbeat
- chest pain

- fever
- blisters or rash
- hives
- itching
- swelling of the face, throat, tongue, lips, eyes, hands, feet, ankles, or lower legs
- increased difficulty breathing
- difficulty swallowing
- hoarseness

Albuterol may cause other side effects. Call your doctor if you have any unusual problems while taking this medication.

### **What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?**

Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom). Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed. Talk to your pharmacist about the proper disposal of your medication.

### **In case of emergency/overdose**

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

Symptoms of overdose may include:

- seizures
- chest pain
- fast, irregular or pounding heartbeat
- nervousness
- headache
- uncontrollable shaking of a part of the body
- dry mouth
- nausea
- dizziness
- excessive tiredness
- lack of energy
- difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep

### **What other information should I know?**

Keep all appointments with your doctor.

Do not let anyone else take your medication. Ask your pharmacist any questions you have about refilling your prescription.

It is important for you to keep a written list of all of the prescription and nonprescription (over-the-counter) medicines you are taking, as well as any products such as vitamins, minerals, or other dietary supplements. You should bring this list with you each time you visit a doctor or if you are admitted to a hospital. It is also important information to carry with you in case of emergencies.

## Other names

- salbutamol



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**The following brand names are from RxNorm, a standardized nomenclature for clinical drugs produced by the National Library of Medicine:**

## Brand names

- Proventil
- Ventolin
- Volmax
- Vospire