

## Potassium Iodide Warnings and Side Effects

Adapted from Everyday Health | By Lynn Marks | Medically Reviewed by Robert Jasmer, MD

### What Is Potassium Iodide?

Potassium iodide is a medicine that helps relieve congestion in people with breathing problems such as asthma, emphysema, or bronchitis.

The drug can also be used during a nuclear radiation emergency to protect the thyroid gland from radioactive iodine.

Potassium iodide is also sometimes used to treat an overactive thyroid and a skin condition known as sporotrichosis.

The medicine is sold under various brand names, including Iosat, Thyrosafe, and ThyroShield.

Potassium iodide is available in both prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) forms.

The drug is an anti-thyroid medicine. It works by shrinking the thyroid gland and blocking radioactive iodine from entering the gland.

Potassium iodide loosens congestion by helping the lungs secrete thinner mucus.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) first approved potassium iodide in 1979. It's marketed as Iosat by Anbex, Inc., and is made by several other manufacturers.

### Potassium Iodide Warnings

Potassium iodide may cause thyroid problems, high potassium levels in the blood, or iodide poisoning.

Call your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms while taking this medicine:

- Swelling in your throat or neck
- Chest pain
- Irregular heartbeat
- Muscle weakness
- Pain or burning in your mouth
- Severe headache
- Tingly feeling
- Eye irritation

Before taking this medicine, tell your doctor if you have or have had:

- High levels of potassium in your blood
- Addison's disease (an adrenal gland disorder)
- Kidney disease
- Heart disease
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- A thyroid disorder

- A genetic muscle disorder
- Dermatitis herpetiformis (a skin disease that causes groups of itchy blisters)
- Hypocomplementemic vasculitis (a condition that causes frequent outbreaks of hives and other symptoms)
- Graves' disease (a condition in which the body attacks the thyroid gland)
- Hashimoto's thyroiditis (swelling of the thyroid gland)
- Allergies to medications

Tell any doctor who treats you that you're taking potassium iodide. The drug can cause unusual results on certain medical tests.

### **Pregnancy and Potassium Iodide**

Potassium iodide could harm an unborn baby.

Don't use this medicine if you're pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

Use an effective birth control method while taking potassium iodide.

The drug can pass into breast milk and hurt a breastfeeding infant. Don't breastfeed while taking potassium iodide.

### **Potassium Iodide Side Effects**

#### *Common Side Effects of Potassium Iodide*

Tell your doctor if any of the following side effects are severe or don't go away:

- Metallic taste in the mouth
- Swollen glands
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomachache
- Headache

#### *Serious Side Effects of Potassium Iodide*

Tell your doctor right away if you experience any of the symptoms listed in the Potassium Iodide Warnings section above, or any of the following serious side effects:

- Rash, hives, or acne
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Swelling of the face, lips, tongue, throat, hands, or feet
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath

- Trouble speaking, breathing, or swallowing
- Feeling anxious or irritable
- A lump under the skin at the base of the neck

### **Potassium Iodide Interactions**

Tell your doctor about all prescription, non-prescription, illegal, recreational, herbal, nutritional, or dietary drugs you're taking, especially:

- Lithium (Eskalith, Lithobid)
- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors such as benazepril (Lotensin), captopril (Capoten), enalapril (Vasotec), fosinopril (Monopril), lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril), moexipril (Univasc), perindopril (Aceon), quinapril (Accupril), ramipril (Altace), and trandolapril (Mavik)
- Diuretics (water pills)
- Medications to treat overactive thyroid, including methimazole (Tapazole), propylthiouracil (PTU), or radioactive iodine
- Multivitamins or mineral supplements that contain potassium

### **Potassium Iodide Dosage**

Potassium iodide comes as a liquid or tablet to take by mouth.

It's usually taken three to four times a day to treat cough, breathing difficulties, or hyperthyroidism. It's usually taken once a day to protect against radiation exposure.

Your dose and length of use will depend on your medical condition and response to treatment.

Follow all the instructions on the product label carefully when taking potassium iodide. Don't take more or less of the medicine than is prescribed.

Measure the liquid form of potassium iodide with the special dose-measuring dropper, which should be provided with your medicine. Ask your pharmacist if you didn't receive one.

Mix the liquid with a full glass of water, milk, or fruit juice.

You can crush the tablets and mix them with water or certain other liquids.

### **Potassium Iodide Overdose**

If you suspect an overdose, contact a poison control center or emergency room immediately.

You can get in touch with a poison control center at (800) 222-1222

### **Missed Dose of Potassium Iodide**

If you miss a dose of potassium iodide, take it as soon as you remember. However, skip it if it's almost time for your next dose. Don't double up on doses to make up for a missed one.