

# NORETHISTERONE

**Brand names** Micronor, Noriday, Noristerat, Primolut N, Utovlan

**Used in the following combined preparations** Brevinor, Climagest, Loestrin, Norinyl, Synphase, TriNovum, and others

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Norethisterone is a progestogen, a synthetic hormone similar to the natural female sex hormone, progesterone. It has a wide variety of uses including the postponement of menstruation and the treatment of menstrual disorders such as endometriosis (p.120). When used for these disorders, it is taken only on certain days during the menstrual cycle. In combination with oestrogens, it is also prescribed as hormone replacement

therapy (HRT), which is usually only advised for short-term use around the menopause (p.105), and in the treatment of certain breast cancers. One of norethisterone's major uses is as an oral contraceptive. It may be used on its own or with an oestrogen. It is also available in an injectable contraceptive preparation.

Adverse effects are rare, but oral contraceptives may cause breakthrough bleeding (p.121).

## QUICK REFERENCE

**Drug group** Female sex hormone (p.105)

**Overdose danger rating** Low

**Dependence rating** Low

**Prescription needed** Yes

**Available as generic** Yes

## INFORMATION FOR USERS

**Your drug prescription is tailored for you. Do not alter dosage without checking with your doctor.**

### How taken/used



Tablets, injection, skin patch.

### Frequency and timing of doses

1–3 x daily (tablets); once every 8 weeks (injection); 2 x weekly (skin patch).

### Adult dosage range

10–15mg daily (menstrual disorders); 15mg daily (postponement of menstruation); 350mcg daily (progestogen-only contraceptives); 700mcg–1mg daily (HRT); 30–60mg daily (cancer).

### Onset of effect

The drug starts to act within a few hours.

### Duration of action

24 hours.

### Diet advice

None.

### Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children. Protect from light.

### Missed dose

Take as soon as you remember. If you are taking the drug for contraception, see what to do if you miss a pill (p.123).

### Stopping the drug

The drug can be safely stopped as soon as contraceptive protection is no longer required. If prescribed for an underlying disorder, do not stop taking the drug without consulting your doctor. When the drug is used to treat menstrual disorders, a normal period should occur 2 to 3 days after it is stopped.

### Exceeding the dose

An occasional unintentional extra dose is unlikely to be a cause for concern. But if you notice any unusual symptoms, or if a large overdose has been taken, notify your doctor.

## SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

### Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have liver or kidney problems.
- You have diabetes.
- You have had epileptic seizures.
- You suffer from migraine.
- You have acute porphyria.
- You have heart or circulatory problems, especially a history of venous thrombosis.
- You are taking other medicines.



### Pregnancy

Not usually prescribed. May cause defects in the baby. Discuss with your doctor.



### Breast-feeding

The drug passes into the breast milk, but at normal doses adverse effects on the baby are unlikely. Discuss with your doctor.



### Infants and children

Not prescribed.



### Over 60

Not usually prescribed.



### Driving and hazardous work

No special problems.



### Alcohol

No special problems.

### Surgery and general anaesthetics

Inform your doctor or dentist that you are taking norethisterone. He or she will tell you when to stop taking it prior to any surgery.

## POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Adverse effects of norethisterone are rarely troublesome and are generally typical of drugs

of this type. Prolonged treatment may cause jaundice due to liver damage.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Breakthrough bleeding	●			●		
Swollen feet/ankles		●	●			
Weight gain		●	●			
Acne/skin discoloration		●	●			
Depression/headache		●		●		
Jaundice		●		●	●	
Pain or tightness in chest		●		●	●	●
Visual or hearing disturbances		●		●	●	●

## INTERACTIONS

**General note** Norethisterone may interfere with the beneficial effects of many drugs, including oral anticoagulants, anticonvulsants, antihypertensives, and antidiabetic drugs. Many other drugs may reduce the contraceptive effect of norethisterone-containing pills. These

include anticonvulsants, antituberculous drugs, certain antivirals, antibiotics, and St John's wort. Be sure to inform your doctor that you are taking norethisterone before taking additional prescribed medication.

**Ciclosporin** Levels of ciclosporin may be raised by norethisterone.

## PROLONGED USE

As part of HRT, norethisterone is usually only advised for short-term use after the menopause. It is not normally recommended for long-term use or for treating osteoporosis. HRT increases the risk of venous thrombosis and breast cancer. The breast cancer risk reduces after stopping the drug, disappearing entirely after 10 years.

**Monitoring** Blood-pressure checks and physical examination, including regular mammograms, may be performed.