

BENZOYL PEROXIDE

Brand names Acnecide, Brevoxyl, Oxy 10, Oxy On-the-Spot, PanOxyl
Used in the following combined preparations Duac Once Daily, Epiduo, Quinoderm

GENERAL INFORMATION

Benzoyl peroxide is used in a variety of topical preparations for the treatment of acne. Available over the counter, it comes in concentrations of varying strengths for mild to moderate acne.

Benzoyl peroxide works by softening and shedding the top layer of skin and unblocking the sebaceous glands. It can also reduce inflammation of blocked hair follicles by killing the bacteria that infect them.

Benzoyl peroxide may cause irritation due to its drying effect on the skin, but this generally diminishes with time. The drug should be applied to the affected areas as directed on the label. Washing

the area prior to application greatly enhances the drug's beneficial effects. Side effects are less likely if treatment is started with a preparation containing a low concentration of benzoyl peroxide, and changed to a stronger preparation gradually and only if necessary. Marked dryness and peeling of the skin, which may occur, can usually be controlled by reducing the frequency of application. Care should be taken to avoid contact of the drug with the eyes, mouth, and mucous membranes. It is also advisable to avoid excessive exposure to sunlight. Preparations of benzoyl peroxide can bleach clothing and hair.

QUICK REFERENCE

Drug group Drug for acne (p.137)
Overdose danger rating Low
Dependence rating Low
Prescription needed No (most preparations)
Available as generic No

INFORMATION FOR USERS

Follow instructions on the label. Call your doctor if symptoms worsen.

How taken/used



Cream, body wash, gel, lotion.

Frequency and timing of doses

1–2 x daily (after washing with soap and water).

Dosage range

Start with the lowest strength preparation (2.5 per cent) and, if necessary, increase gradually to highest strength (10 per cent).

Onset of effect

Reduces oiliness of skin immediately. Acne usually improves within 4–6 weeks.

Duration of action

24–48 hours.

Diet advice

None.

Storage

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

Missed dose

Apply as soon as you remember.

Stopping the drug

Can be safely stopped as soon as you no longer need it.

Exceeding the dose

A single extra application is unlikely to cause problems. Regular overuse may result in extensive irritation, peeling, redness, and swelling of the skin.

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

Be sure to tell your doctor or pharmacist before using this drug if:

- You have eczema.
- You have sunburn.
- You have had a previous allergic reaction to benzoyl peroxide.
- You are taking other medicines.



Pregnancy

No evidence of risk.



Breast-feeding

No evidence of risk.



Infants and children

Not usually recommended under 12 years except under medical supervision.



Over 60

Not usually required.



Driving and hazardous work

No known problems.



Alcohol

No known problems.

POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Application of benzoyl peroxide may cause temporary burning or stinging of the skin. Redness, peeling, and swelling may result from excessive drying of the skin and usually

clears up if the treatment is stopped or used less frequently. If severe burning, blistering, or crusting occur, stop using benzoyl peroxide and consult your doctor.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Skin irritation	●		●			
Dryness/peeling	●		●			
Stinging/redness	●		●			
Blistering/crusting/swelling		●		●	●	

INTERACTIONS

Skin-drying preparations Medicated cosmetics, soaps, toiletries, and other anti-acne preparations increase the likelihood of dryness and irritation of the skin with benzoyl peroxide.

PROLONGED USE

Benzoyl peroxide usually takes 4–6 weeks to produce an effect. If the acne has not improved after 6 weeks, consult your doctor.