

TERBUTALINE

Brand name Bricanyl

Used in the following combined preparations None

GENERAL INFORMATION

Terbutaline is a sympathomimetic bronchodilator used to treat conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and bronchospasm, in which the airways become constricted. Terbutaline is also used to delay premature labour.

Muscle tremor, especially of the hands, is common with terbutaline and

usually disappears on reduction of the dose or with continued use as the body adapts to the drug. In common with the other sympathomimetic drugs, it may produce nervousness and restlessness.

QUICK REFERENCE

Drug group Bronchodilator (p.48)

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, liquid (syrup), injection, inhaler, nebuluses for nebulizer.

Frequency and timing of doses

3 x daily (tablets/syrup); as necessary (inhaler).

Dosage range

Adults 7.5–15mg daily (tablets/syrup); 0.5mg when required, up to 2mg daily (inhaler); as directed by doctor (nebuluses).

Children Reduced dose according to age and weight.

Onset of effect

Within a few minutes (inhaler); within 1–2 hours (tablets/syrup).

Duration of action

7–8 hours (tablets/syrup).

Diet advice

None.

Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children. Protect from light. Do not puncture or burn aerosol containers.

Missed dose

Do not take the missed dose. Take your next dose as usual.

Stopping the drug

Do not stop the drug without consulting your doctor; symptoms may recur.

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 heart problems.
- You have high blood pressure.
- You have an overactive thyroid.
- You are taking other medicines.



Pregnancy

Safety in early pregnancy not established, although it is used in late pregnancy to prevent premature labour. Discuss with your doctor.



Breast-feeding

The drug passes into the breast milk but in amounts too small to affect the baby.



Infants and children

Reduced dose necessary.



Over 60

Increased likelihood of adverse effects. Reduced dose may therefore be necessary.



Driving and hazardous work

Avoid such activities until you have learned how terbutaline affects you because the drug can cause tremor of the hands.



Alcohol

No special problems.

POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Muscle tremor (particularly affecting the hands), anxiety, and restlessness are the most common adverse effects. Rarely, wheezing or breathlessness may worsen immediately after

inhaler use (paradoxical bronchospasm); if this happens, stop using the drug and contact your doctor immediately.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Anxiety/nervous tension	●		●			
Muscle tremor	●		●			
Restlessness	●		●			
Headache	●			●		
Muscle cramps		●		●		
Palpitations		●		●	●	
Worsening breathlessness		●		●	●	●

INTERACTIONS

Other sympathomimetics may add to the effects of terbutaline and vice versa, so increasing the risk of adverse effects.

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) Terbutaline may interact with these drugs to cause a dangerous rise in blood pressure.

Diuretics, corticosteroids, and theophylline taken with terbutaline may reduce blood levels of potassium, causing muscle weakness.

Beta blockers may reduce the beneficial effects of terbutaline.

PROLONGED USE

No problems expected. However, you should contact your doctor if you find you are needing to use your terbutaline inhaler more than usual. Failure to respond to the drug may be a result of worsening asthma that requires urgent medical attention.

Monitoring Periodic blood tests for potassium may be needed in people on high-dose treatment with terbutaline combined with other asthma drugs.