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Minocycline

Minocycline pills are antibiotics sold as Minocin, Solodyn and generic Minocycline. This antibiotic has been in use since the 1970's and is a great acne therapy. It kills the acne bacteria more effectively than other acne pills and has a separate "anti-inflammatory" effect. This means it reduces the redness, swelling and tenderness or pimples whether it kills the acne bacteria or not. Because of this effect, Minocycline is now also being used for some people with painful, swollen joints.

Of all the antibiotic pills used for acne, Minocycline is the most effective, easiest to take and has the least side effects. Side-effects do occur, but are usually minor. Minocycline rarely causes significant blood or internal problems. A topical cream, such as Retin-A, Differin or Benzoyl Peroxide is normally used along with Minocycline.

Start off taking it only at bedtime for a few days until your body gets "used to" this medication. During this time you may get dizziness or headaches. These last a few hours and are gone by the morning. After that, the medication can be taken any time and is easiest to remember at meals. Only the generic form must be taken one hour before or two hours after meals.

If the side effects continue, you will need to stop the drug or take a lower dose. One in a hundred people have an allergy to the drug which shows up as outbreaks of hives two or three weeks into the treatment, or feeling sick or unwell. Most dermatologists feel that the name brands, Minocin and Solodyn, work better than generic Minocycline and cause less allergic reactions but a little more headache and dizziness.

There are a few significant, but very rare side effects that develop in about 1 in 10:000 people. One is hypersensitivity lupus/hepatitis, which causes severe joint pains. The other is Pseudotumor cerebri (an accumulation of fluid around the brain) which causes progressively worsening headaches and vision problems. Stop the medication if these occur. They resolve over time, but very slowly. These also occur with other antibiotics. A form of Lupus seems unique to Minocycline. It appears after taking the pill for an average of 3 years. Remember that facial scarring and long lasting psychological harm are very real "side effects" of acne and are much more common than 1 in 10,000.

If your acne does not improve after 2 to 3 months of Minocycline you will need to take the medication "Accutane" instead. If the acne improves, the dose needs to be lowered or Minocycline will build up in your body. This is a problem because the medication turns dark purple in your body and might show up as a discoloration. This looks like "bruises that don't go away", or dark pigment in acne scars. This will clear up as long as it is recognized and the medication is stopped, but it may take a year or more. This is one of the reasons regular exams are needed if you are on Minocycline. More difficult pigmentation problems occur if you take the maximum dose for a few years. Recent research has show that the pigment problems can be avoided by taking Vitamin C 500mg twice daily. This prevents the pigment and should be taken by everyone on the drug for more than a few months. If needed, the pigment may be treated with a the frequency doubled (532) or Q-switched Nd:YAG lasers.

Overall, Minocycline is safer than Ibuprofen (Advil, Nuprin, and Motrin) or Penicillin. Minocycline has been a standard treatment for severe acne for over 20 years and has been proven safe and effective with proper usage.