



Official reprint from UpToDate®

www.uptodate.com ©2021 UpToDate, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All Rights Reserved.

Wolters Kluwer

The content on the UpToDate website is not intended nor recommended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your own physician or other qualified health care professional regarding any medical questions or conditions. The use of UpToDate content is governed by the [UpToDate Terms of Use](#). ©2021 UpToDate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Cephalexin: Patient drug information

Copyright 1978-2021 Lexicomp, Inc. All rights reserved.

(For additional information [see "Cephalexin: Drug information"](#) and [see "Cephalexin: Pediatric drug information"](#))

Brand Names: US

Daxbia [DSC]; Keflex

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Cephalex; AURO-Cephalexin; DOM-Cephalexin [DSC]; Keflex; LUPIN-Cephalexin; PMS-Cephalexin; TEVA-Cephalexin; TEVA-Cephalexin 125; TEVA-Cephalexin 250

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat bacterial infections.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to cephalexin or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you are taking probenecid.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for

you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your blood work checked if you are on this drug for a long time. Talk with your doctor.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes) and test your urine glucose, talk with your doctor to find out which tests are best to use.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- Do not use longer than you have been told. A second infection may happen.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or feeling very tired or weak.
- Feeling confused.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- Seizures.

- Very bad dizziness.
- Very bad headache.
- Very bad joint pain.
- Vaginal itching or discharge.
- Diarrhea is common with antibiotics. Rarely, a severe form called C diff–associated diarrhea (CDAD) may happen. Sometimes, this has led to a deadly bowel problem. CDAD may happen during or a few months after taking antibiotics. Call your doctor right away if you have stomach pain, cramps, or very loose, watery, or bloody stools. Check with your doctor before treating diarrhea.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Stomach pain or diarrhea.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Take with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Liquid (suspension):

- Shake well before use.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

Tablets and capsules:

- Store at room temperature.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

Liquid (suspension):

- Store in a refrigerator. Throw away any part not used after 2 weeks.
- Keep lid tightly closed.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Use of UpToDate is subject to the [Subscription and License Agreement](#).

Topic 11936 Version 179.0

→