

## Spironolactone

### What is Spironolactone?

Spironolactone is a diuretic or water pill used predominantly for heart failure or fluid retention. It has anti-androgenic properties, limiting the effect of the male hormone testosterone.

### What is it used for?

In Dermatological practice, the anti-androgenic properties of Spironolactone are used for:

Acne  
Hirsutism  
Female Pattern Hair Loss  
Excess Sebum/seborrhoea (greasy skin)

### What are the potential side effects?

Due to the diuretic effect, urinary frequency (going to the loo often) can occur and it is best taken early in the day and if a twice daily dose is recommended, the second dose should be taken early afternoon. Due to the effects on hormones, it can decrease libido (sex drive), cause breast tissue tenderness, or menstrual irregularities. It can alter the sexual development of a baby and pregnancy must be avoided.

Further side effects can include dry skin, dehydration, dizziness and low blood pressure.

### Does it require any monitoring?

Diuretics can effect the different salts in the body. Spironolactone can lower sodium and increase potassium. It rarely does this in young healthy adults, even when used at high doses commonly used in dermatology. It may be recommended to have a blood test a few weeks after starting, but once established on a dose, it is unlikely you will need any frequent tests.

### Is it used on its own or with other medications?

Spironolactone is rarely used on its own. In acne and hirsutism, it may be combined with a combined oral contraceptive pill or topical retinoid (Vitamin A based product). In pattern hair loss, it is usually combined with Minoxidil or low level laser therapy.

