



Drug Information

SEPTRA (Co-Trimoxazole)

(other names: Bactrim®, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP/SMX))

What is SEPTRA?

SEPTRA (Co-trimoxazole) is a combination of two antibiotics (Trimethoprim and Sulfamethoxazole) that are effective against a wide range of bacteria germs.

Why am I given SEPTRA as my medication?

For people with HIV/AIDS, SEPTRA is most commonly used to prevent or treat life-threatening pneumonias such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP) or pneumonias caused by other bacteria. It is also used to prevent other infections, such as the life-threatening brain infection toxoplasmosis.

SEPTRA is a sulfa drug. People with a history of allergy to sulfa drugs should never take SEPTRA.

How do I take this medication?

SEPTRA is available as single- or double-strength tablets, as well as in liquid form. The double-strength tablet contains twice the amount of the drug in the single-strength tablet. The amount of medication you need to take differs depending on the condition you have.

- For people taking SEPTRA to prevent PCP, the usual amount or dosage is one double-strength tablet daily on a long-term basis. Some people may also take one single-strength tablet every day or one double-strength tablet three times a week on a long-term basis.
- For people taking SEPTRA as a treatment for PCP, the usual amount of SEPTRA needed is two double-strength tablets four times a day for about three weeks.
- When SEPTRA is used to treat most other common bacterial infections, the usual amount needed is one double-strength tablet twice a day for one to two weeks.

SEPTRA can be taken with or without food. You should drink a full glass of water with each dose of SEPTRA. If SEPTRA upsets your stomach, try taking it with food.

SEPTRA should be kept at room temperature well out of the reach of children. Do not store it in your bathroom or refrigerator.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is within two hours of your next dose, just wait until your next regular dose. Do not double the dose.

What are the side effects of SEPTRA?

The most common side effects in people taking SEPTRA are fever, skin rash and itching. These symptoms may not appear for as many as 10 days after starting the medication.

Other side effects that are less common may include stomach upset with nausea and diarrhea, headaches and joint pain.



If these side effects occur, talk with your doctor or pharmacist to get advice. Some medications can be used to treat the side effects so you can continue to take SEPTRA.

For people with serious side effects, there are special procedures called “desensitization” that may help the body adjust to SEPTRA.

For people who really cannot tolerate SEPTRA, talk with your doctor or pharmacist about other ways to prevent or treat PCP.

In some cases, SEPTRA may decrease the amount of white blood cells (needed to help fight infection), red blood cells (needed to help carry oxygen around your body) and platelets (needed to help your blood clot). SEPTRA can also cause problems with the liver and kidneys. Therefore, it is important to have your blood checked regularly to monitor any changes.

What other precautions should I know when taking SEPTRA?

People who are allergic to sulfa drugs should never take SEPTRA. It may trigger a very serious allergy reaction.

If you are pregnant, you should talk to your doctor before taking SEPTRA to discuss potential risks to the fetus.

SEPTRA can make your skin more sensitive to the sun or sunlamps. Therefore, wear protective clothing and use a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15 whenever you are exposed to sunlight for long periods. Avoid the use of tanning beds.

Tell your doctor or pharmacist about all the prescription or non-prescription medications (including vitamins and herbs) that you are taking. Discuss with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or non-prescription medications.

For people taking SEPTRA on a long-term basis, the effectiveness of birth control pills may decrease and they may have more breakthrough bleeding.

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