Contraception

VERY IMPORTANT!

If you are female it is **extremely** important that you **read** and **understand** the information in this section.

**Why MUST I Prevent Pregnancy?**

Even if you are not sexually active it is important that you understand the effects that Isotretinoin can have on the unborn child should you become pregnant while taking Isotretinoin.

The medication in the capsules is Isotretinoin, and it is *teratogenic*. This means that it can cause birth defects, that is, the unborn child can become deformed.

Birth defects can only be caused by Isotretinoin if you use Isotretinoin while you are pregnant, become pregnant while you are using Isotretinoin or become pregnant within one month of stopping taking your Isotretinoin.

Your doctor will give you a pregnancy test to ensure that you are not pregnant before allowing you to start taking Isotretinoin. Should you become pregnant while taking Isotretinoin or within one month after the end of your Isotretinoin treatment you will need to discuss the action that may need to be taken with your doctor. This is a very serious situation.

For this reason it is vitally important to follow strict birth control procedures.

**Who Needs To Be **REALLY** Careful?**

ALL women of child bearing potential! This means any woman or girl, who is taking Isotretinoin, who has started menstruating needs to follow a strict birth control procedure.

Before you can begin taking Isotretinoin you will be required to take a pregnancy test, please don’t be offended.

You **MUST** use strict birth control for at least one month before you start your Isotretinoin treatment, during the *entire* Isotretinoin treatment and for at least one month after you stop taking Isotretinoin.

You should wait until the 2nd or 3rd day of your next menstrual period before you start taking Isotretinoin. This is an extra check to make sure you are not pregnant.

If you do become pregnant while you are taking Isotretinoin, you should immediately stop taking your Isotretinoin and tell your doctor straight away.

Isotretinoin does not affect your fertility in the long term. So even after taking Isotretinoin you should be able to become pregnant in the future.

**Who Is Responsible For Making Sure I Don’t Get Pregnant?**

**You are!** The only person who can make sure that you do not get pregnant while you are taking Isotretinoin is you. It is relatively easy to prevent pregnancy. The details of the recommended strict birth control procedure are explained below.

Before you begin taking Isotretinoin your doctor will go through the risks associated with Isotretinoin and pregnancy. Your doctor will ask you to sign a Consent Form. Signing this form means that you understand these risks and that you will do everything possible to make sure that you do not become pregnant while you are taking Isotretinoin or for one month after you stop taking Isotretinoin.
What Is Strict Birth Control?

Strict birth control or contraception means carefully following a procedure to make sure you do not become pregnant. The most effective form of birth control or contraception is ‘the pill’ (oral contraceptive) plus a barrier method (condom or diaphragm). You should carefully follow all the directions for the use of these methods of contraception.

You will need a prescription for ‘the pill’, which can be provided by your local doctor or local Family Planning Clinic. Your doctor can also provide you with condoms if needed.

Your doctor or your local Family Planning Clinic can provide you with more information about contraception.

When Can I Stop Being So Careful?

One month after the end of your Isotretinoin treatment the risk of birth defects is no greater than normal.

Should you wish to become pregnant, you can do so one month after you have stopped taking Isotretinoin.

Where Can I Get More Help and Information?

For further information about contraception or the address of your local Family Planning Clinic contact the Family Planning Association in New Zealand.