

# Gentamicin

## **Why is this medication prescribed?**

This medication is used alone or with other medications to prevent certain infections or to treat a wide variety of serious bacterial infections. Gentamicin belongs to a class of drugs known as aminoglycoside antibiotics. It works by killing the bacteria that causes the infection.

## **How should this medicine be used?**

This medication is usually given by injection into a vein or a muscle (every 6 hours to once a day) or exactly as directed by your doctor. Dosage is based on the kind of infection, your weight, kidney function, medical condition, gentamicin blood levels, and response to treatment.

Check the medication after it has been mixed with the dilution fluid in the IV bag. If cloudiness or particles are present at any time, do not use the liquid. Do not mix this antibiotic with any other antibiotics in the same IV bag. Do not give this medication through the same IV tubing with another antibiotic at the same time or afterward unless told to do so by your pharmacist.

Use it at the same time(s) each day. Do not stop this medication before you complete the prescribed time for treatment, even if you feel better. Skipping, changing your dose, or not completing the whole treatment course without approval from your doctor may cause the infection to get worse or make the infection more difficult to treat (resistant). Tell your doctor immediately if your infection symptoms return (e.g., fever, chills, body aches) while using this medication or after stopping it.

## **What special precautions should I follow?**

Before using gentamicin injection, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to other aminoglycoside antibiotics (e.g., tobramycin, amikacin); or if you are allergic to sulfites; or if you have any other allergies.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, especially of: kidney problems, hearing problems, immune system problems, dehydration, nausea/vomiting, low blood minerals (e.g., potassium, magnesium, calcium), myasthenia gravis, Parkinson's disease, burns over a large area of skin, cystic fibrosis.

Before having surgery, tell your doctor or dentist that you are using this medication. Caution is advised when using this drug in the elderly. Gentamicin is not recommended for use during pregnancy. This drug passes into breast milk.

## **What should I do if I forget a dose?**

If you miss a dose, use it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

### **What side effects can this medication cause?**

If you experience any of the following serious side effects, stop taking gentamicin and seek emergency medical attention:

- an allergic reaction (shortness of breath; closing of the throat; hives; swelling of the lips, face, or tongue; rash; or fainting);
- little or no urine;
- decreased hearing or ringing in the ears;
- dizziness, clumsiness, or unsteadiness;
- numbness, skin tingling, muscle twitching, or seizures; or
- severe watery diarrhea and abdominal cramps.

Other, less serious side effects may be more likely to occur. Continue to take gentamicin and talk to your doctor if you experience

- increased thirst;
- loss of appetite;
- nausea or vomiting;
- a rash.

### **What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?**

Store at room temperature between 20-25 degrees C away from light.

In case of emergency/overdose

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

### **What other information should I know?**

Gentamicin may cause damage to the kidneys and/or nerves. Kidney function and drug levels in the blood may be monitored with blood tests during treatment. Tell your doctor if you experience hearing loss, dizziness, numbness, skin tingling, muscle twitching, or seizures which may be signs of nerve damage.