TRIMETHOPRIM-SULFAMETHOXAZOLE

This medicine is also known as co-trimoxazole.

Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole is an antibiotic used to treat or prevent bacterial infections.

Reason for antibiotic: My Doctor is:
Planned duration: Doctor contact details:

How do I take trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole?

- Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole is best taken with food to reduce stomach upset.

What do I need to be aware of before taking trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole?

- If you have had a previous allergy to sulphonamides (sometimes called ‘sulfur’) discuss this with your doctor before you start taking this medicine.
- Pregnancy: This medicine should be avoided in pregnancy. If you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant during your antibiotic course, contact your doctor to discuss as an alternative antibiotic.
- Breastfeeding: This medicine is considered safe for breastfeeding, provided the infant does not have G6PD deficiency or is not less than one month old with high bilirubin (contact your GP if unsure). The breastfed infant should be monitored for side effects such as diarrhoea, rashes or thrush.

What do I need to be aware of while taking trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole?

- Your skin may be more sensitive to the sun so you may get sunburned more easily. Try to avoid direct sun exposure, wear protective clothing and use sunscreen while you are taking this antibiotic.
- Make sure you drink enough fluids to keep hydrated while you are taking this medicine. If you have been instructed to restrict your fluid for other reasons (such as heart failure) then discuss this with your doctor.
- This medicine can increase the amount of potassium in your blood. If you are on other medications that also increase potassium your doctor may want to check the amount of potassium in your blood with blood tests.
What are the common side effects of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole?

- **Nausea**: usually mild and improves over a few days.
- **Vomiting**: contact your doctor if this is troubling you.
- **Diarrhoea**: usually improves over a few days. If this occurs, **avoid** anti-diarrhoeal medications such as loperamide (the active ingredient in Imodium® or Gastro-Stop®), unless advised by your doctor.
- If any of these symptoms are severe or last more than a few days, see your doctor.

What are the rare side effects of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole to be aware of?

**Contact your doctor immediately if you develop any of the following:**

- **Allergic reactions**
  - Such as a rash, itch, blisters or red skin spots – see your doctor immediately.
  - Signs of a serious allergic reaction, such as difficulty breathing or swelling of the face and/or lips – contact an **ambulance** immediately.
- **Changes in liver or kidney function**;
  - Signs of liver problems include loss of appetite, severe nausea or vomiting or yellowing of the eyes or skin.
  - During prolonged treatment (weeks) your doctor may request a blood test to check your liver and kidneys are working properly.
- **Decreased blood cells in the body**
  - Signs include unexplained tiredness, shortness of breath when exercising, dizziness, looking pale, and bleeding or bruising.
  - During prolonged treatment (weeks) your doctor may request a blood test to check the number of the blood cells in your body.