

## **Hill Center for Dermatology, PC**

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Tetracycline, an antibiotic, is commonly used to help control acne. Sometimes the beneficial response requires as long as two months, so patients are encouraged to give the medication adequate time to work.

The goal of tetracycline therapy in acne is to bring the acne under control and then gradually reduce the dose to the lowest level which still has the benefit. Some patients benefit from long-term antibiotic treatment, usually without serious side effects. Although the normal bacteria in the gut may become resistant to tetracycline, these bacteria usually do not cause problems, and if another infection develops while taking tetracycline, another antibiotic can usually be temporarily substituted for tetracycline.

Minerals such as calcium, iron, zinc, etc., interfere with the absorption of tetracycline; therefore foods (such as dairy products), vitamins, and antacids that contain these minerals should be taken one hour before or two hours after taking tetracycline.

### **Side effects that may occur with tetracycline include the following:**

*Upset stomach:* It is best to take tetracycline on an empty stomach but heartburn or stomach pain is common. Eating something light (non dairy) such as a cracker or slice of bread may help. If you take tetracycline at bedtime wait at least 20 minutes before lying down to prevent irritation of the esophagus and regurgitation.

*Photosensitivity:* Tetracycline can make a person more sensitive to the sun and tanning beds. This can cause severe burns and be very painful and serious. It is recommended to avoid exposure and wear protective clothing and sunscreen.

*Vaginal yeast infection:* Antibiotics can alter the balance of normal bacteria in the vagina and result in vaginal yeast overgrowth. If symptoms such as discharge and itching develop you should discontinue the tetracycline and use an over the counter treatment or call for additional advice.

*Tetracycline may make birth control pills less effective.*

*Tetracycline must not be taken during pregnancy or while breast feeding.*

*Tetracycline should not be taken by children less than 9 years of age.*

*If you have abnormalities of the blood, kidneys or liver let your doctor know.*

*Other possible side effects rarely occur. If you develop symptoms while taking the medication it is safest to assume the symptoms are related to the medication and it should be discontinued and you should call the office.*