

# Theophylline

Theophylline is used to control symptoms caused by lung problems such as asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD) or other lung problems. These medical conditions can cause you to experience wheezing (a high-pitched whistling sound made while breathing), shortness of breath or chest tightness. Theophylline helps to open up your air passages in your lungs and allows you to breathe easier.



## What is this medication for?

Theophylline is used to control symptoms caused by lung problems such as asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD) or other lung problems. These medical conditions can cause you to experience wheezing (a high-pitched whistling sound made while breathing), shortness of breath or chest tightness. Theophylline helps to open up your air passages in your lungs and allows you to breathe easier.

## How should I take/use this medication?

- Take exactly as how your healthcare professional has told you.
- Do not stop taking your medication without checking with your healthcare professional.
- You may take this medication with or without food.
- Some theophylline tablets are made into sustained release forms. Sustained release forms of theophylline provide a slow and continuous supply of medicine into your body. If you are taking sustained release forms of theophylline, you should swallow the whole tablet or break it into half. Do not crush or chew sustained release forms of theophylline.

## What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. Then take your next dose at the usual time. Do not take two doses to make up for the missed dose.

## What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding
- You are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies.
- You are a smoker and want to stop smoking.
- You have the following medical conditions:
  - Seizures or fits
  - Stomach ulcers
  - Heart problems with fast or irregular heartbeat
  - Thyroid problems
  - Liver problems

## What are some side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

In very rare cases, some patients might experience the following:

- Vomiting that does not stop
- Increased, very fast or irregular heartbeat
- Seizures or fits

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

## What are some other side-effects of this medication?

The common side effects include:

- Nausea and stomach upset
  - This can be reduced by taking theophylline after food
- Headache
- Feeling tired
- Difficulty in sleeping
- Shakiness or feeling anxious

These symptoms may happen but should get better over time. Check with your doctor if any of these symptoms are serious or do not go away.

## What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?

Some medications may interact with theophylline and affect the levels of theophylline in your body. Check with your healthcare professional to see if any of your medications interact with theophylline.

You should cut down on your intake of caffeine as it has similar effects to theophylline. Caffeine is commonly found in tea, coffee, chocolates and cola.

## How should I store this medication?

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

## How should I throw away this medication safely?

Pack this medication into a black trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing into the rubbish chute or bin.

### Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

*This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons), Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore and Ministry of Health.*

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