



Acetylcysteine

To treat pulmonary fibrosis

This handout explains acetylcysteine, a supplement used to help reduce lung damage from oxidation.

What is acetylcysteine?

Acetylcysteine is a nutritional supplement. The body uses it to make an *antioxidant* called *glutathione*. Antioxidants are substances that help prevent or slow damage caused by *oxidation*, a normal chemical reaction in the body.

Patients with pulmonary fibrosis usually have lower levels of glutathione in their lungs. Taking acetylcysteine may help increase the glutathione level in the lungs. This increase in glutathione may reduce the damage to the lungs caused by oxidants.

How much should I take?

Look for acetylcysteine in 600 mg capsules. Other doses are available, but this is the amount most people are advised to take at one time.

- Most people take a 600 mg dose of acetylcysteine 3 times a day.
- You can take it with or without food. If you get an upset stomach, it may be better to take it with food. See “What are the side effects?” on the next page.

Where can I buy acetylcysteine?

Acetylcysteine is available at pharmacies, or at many stores that carry vitamins and other dietary supplements. Check stores in your area for availability and price.

You may find that you can get good prices on the Internet. If you buy your medicines online, make sure you use a reputable source.

One way to find a good Internet source is to find a pharmacy with a Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites (VIPPS) seal. Learn more about the VIPPS seal at www.vipps.info.

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Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Interstitial Lung Disease
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206-598-4967

You also want to make sure that the product you buy is safe and effective. Look for seals on the label that indicate the product has been tested by an independent third party company, such as United States Pharmacopoeia (USP), NSF International (NSF), or ConsumerLab (CL). The bottle will have the seal of one of these companies if it has been tested.

What are the side effects?

The most common side effects from acetylcysteine are:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

These side effects should be mild, and they may go away if you take your medicine with food. If your symptoms continue, call your doctor.

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