Soriatane (acitretin)

What is it?
Soriatane (acitretin) is an oral retinoid, which is a synthetic form of vitamin A. Synthetic retinoids were approved in the United States in the 1980s. Soriatane is the only oral retinoid approved by the FDA specifically for treating psoriasis. Isotretinoin is another oral retinoid that is sometimes used instead of Soriatane to treat psoriasis.

How does it work?
The exact way Soriatane works to control psoriasis is unknown. In general, retinoids affect how cells regulate their behavior. Retinoids help control the multiplication of cells. This includes the speed at which skin cells will grow and shed from the skin's surface, which speeds up in psoriasis.

Who can take it?
Soriatane is indicated for use in adults with severe psoriasis. The Soriatane label supports the use of the drug for plaque, guttate, pustular, erythrodermic, and palmoplantar psoriasis.

Who should not take it?
- Pregnant women or women who might become pregnant during treatment
- Women who are breastfeeding
- People with severe liver or kidney disease
- People with repeatedly high levels of fat in the blood that cannot be controlled with other medications
- People who are allergic to or have hypersensitivity to retinoids

How is it used?
Soriatane comes in 10 milligram and 25 milligram capsules. The prescribed dose is taken once a day and should be taken with food. Several factors determine the dosage for each individual, including the type of psoriasis present. Doses may be changed or reduced after symptoms improve, depending on the person’s response.

Can it be used with other treatments?
Soriatane is most effective for treating psoriasis when it is used with phototherapy, rather than by itself. Combination therapy can speed clearing and help reduce the amount of phototherapy needed to clear symptoms. This reduces the risks and side effects of both treatments. Soriatane is sometimes used with Enbrel (etanercept) and Remicade (infliximab) to achieve clearing of psoriasis.

Soriatane may also be prescribed in rotation with other systemic medications, such as cyclosporine or methotrexate.

Side effects
- Hair loss
- Chapped lips and dry mouth
- Dry skin and dry eyes
- Bleeding gums and nose bleeds
- Increased sensitivity to sunlight
- Peeling fingertips and nail changes
- Changes in blood fat levels
- Depression
- Aggressive thoughts
- Headache
- Joint pain
- Decreased night vision
- Elevated liver enzymes

These side effects, and others, seem to be dose dependent. This means they tend to go away after stopping the medication or lowering the dosage.
**Effectiveness**

Soriatane tends to work slowly for plaque psoriasis. Psoriasis may worsen before individuals start to see clearing. After eight to 16 weeks of treatment, skin lesions usually will improve. It may take up to six months for the drug to reach its peak effect.

**Risks**

The most serious is the risk of severe birth defects in developing fetuses if the mother has the drug in her body during pregnancy. Soriatane can remain in the body for many months so it is not to be taken during or for three years before pregnancy. Because of the risk of birth defects, women of childbearing potential must have two negative pregnancy tests before starting Soriatane. They must use two effective forms of birth control at least one month before beginning treatment, while taking the drug and for three years after stopping treatment. Women who become pregnant during the three years following treatment should seek the advice of a doctor who specializes in high-risk pregnancies. Progestin-only birth control pills may not work while taking Soriatane, so women should avoid using them as a primary form of birth control.

Individuals should not donate blood during treatment and for three years after stopping treatment. Donated blood could expose pregnant women to Soriatane.

Your doctor should always be aware of any other medications, therapies or supplements you are using. Avoid dietary supplements with vitamin A. Soriatane is related to vitamin A, and taking vitamin A could add to the drug’s unwanted effects.

Avoid alcohol while using Soriatane as it may raise your risk for liver damage.

Women of childbearing potential who use Soriatane must not drink or eat any substance containing alcohol during treatment and for two months after treatment is stopped. Alcohol can cause Soriatane to convert to a form that is only slowly removed from the body. This increases the risk of birth defects if the woman were to become pregnant.

Soriatane can reduce the effectiveness of phenytoin, a common drug for epilepsy, when given concurrently. It should not be combined with tetracycline (an antibiotic), since both medications can cause increased pressure on the brain, which can have serious consequences.

For detailed information on side effects and safety, talk to your doctor.

**Financial assistance information**

Bridges to Access provides access to Soriatane for certain patients who need help paying for it. Call 1.866.728.4368 for more information.