

Slow-K®

potassium chloride

Consumer Medicine Information

What is in this leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about Slow-K.

It does not contain all the available information. It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

The information in this leaflet was last updated on the date listed on the final page. Some more recent information on the medicine may be available.

You should ensure that you speak to your pharmacist or doctor to obtain the most up to date information on the medicine. You can also download the most up to date leaflet from www.novartis.com.au.

Those updates may contain important information about the medicine and its use of which you should be aware.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking Slow-K against the benefits they expect it will have for you.

If you have any concerns about taking this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Keep this leaflet with the medicine. You may need to read it again.

What Slow-K is used for

Slow-K tablets are used to provide extra potassium:

- for people who do not have enough potassium in their regular diet
- for people who have lost too much potassium from their bodies

because of illness or treatment with certain medicines.

- Slow-K is used in those patients who cannot tolerate or refuse to take liquid or effervescent potassium chloride.

Potassium is essential for life and health. Natural sources of potassium are found in bananas, avocados, raisins, cantaloupe melons, dried dates, apricots and dark-green leafy vegetables.

Too much potassium can also be harmful. That is why it is important to take Slow-K only as prescribed by your doctor.

Slow-K dosage may need to be adjusted if your diet is rich in natural sources of potassium. However, never change your dosage without medical advice.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why Slow-K has been prescribed for you.

Your doctor may have prescribed it for another purpose.

Slow-K is not recommended for use in children as there is not enough information on its use in that age group.

This medicine is not addictive.

Before you take Slow-K

When you must not take it

Do not take Slow-K if you have an allergy to any of the ingredients listed at the end of this leaflet.

Some of the symptoms of an allergic reaction may include shortness of breath, wheezing or difficulty breathing; swelling of the face, lips,

tongue or other parts of the body; rash, itching or hives on the skin.

Do not take Slow-K if you already have a high level of potassium in your body. This can happen in the following medical conditions:

- severe kidney disease
- Addison's disease (underactive adrenal glands) that has not been treated
- dehydration, trauma, severe burns or other serious injury where large amounts of body fluids have been lost
- abnormal blood acidity
- continuing or severe diarrhoea

If you are not sure whether any of the above conditions apply to you, your doctor can give you more information.

Do not take Slow-K if you have a family history of periodic attacks of muscle weakness.

Do not take Slow-K if you have severe kidney problems.

Do not take Slow-K if you have problems with your digestion where passage of food or medicine is slow or blocked.

If you take Slow-K, it may not pass through your digestive system properly and could cause an ulcer.

Do not take Slow-K if you have stomach and/or intestinal ulcers.

Do not take Slow-K after the expiry date printed on the pack or if the packaging is torn or shows signs of tampering.

In that case, return it to your pharmacist.

If you are not sure whether you should start taking Slow-K, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Before you start to take it

Tell your doctor if you are allergic to any other medicines, foods, dyes or preservatives.

Your doctor will want to know if you are prone to allergies.

Tell your doctor if you have any of the following medical conditions:

- metabolic acidosis or blood pH is abnormally low
- undergone intestinal surgery, such as colostomy, ileostomy or urostomy
- a stomach ulcer now or in the past
- kidney problems
- heart problems
- frequent or severe diarrhoea
- intolerance to some sugars

Your doctor may want to take special precautions if you have any of the above conditions.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant or if you are breast feeding.

During pregnancy your digestion tends to slow down. This means that Slow-K tablets may take longer than usual to be digested and can cause increased side effects. Your doctor can discuss with you the risks and benefits of taking Slow-K during pregnancy.

Tell your doctor if:

- you are on a low-salt, low-sugar or any other special diet
- you eat licorice regularly
- you use salt substitutes or drink low-salt milk.

Any of the above can affect the amount of potassium in your body and could change the amount of Slow-K you will need to take.

Taking other medicines

Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines, including medicines that you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.

Some medicines and Slow-K may interfere with each other. These include:

- some diuretic medicines (also called water or fluid tablets)
- medicines used to relieve pain and inflammation
- medicines used to treat Parkinson's disease
- some medicines used to treat stomach cramps
- some medicines used to prevent or treat travel sickness
- some medicines used to treat urinary incontinence
- large doses of laxatives
- medicines for blood pressure, pain, blood thinning, transplant rejection and reflux that could increase potassium levels

These medicines may be affected by Slow-K or they may affect how well it works.

You may need to take different amounts of your medicines or you may need to take different medicines.

Your doctor and pharmacist have more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while taking Slow-K.

If you have not told your doctor about any of these things, tell him/her before you start taking Slow-K.

How to take Slow-K

Follow all directions given to you by your doctor and pharmacist carefully.

They may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

If you do not understand the instructions on the label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.

How much to take

The amount of Slow-K you need will depend on the level of potassium in your body. You will usually need from 2 to 6 tablets each day. It may be necessary to take more Slow-K tablets per day but never increase the dose without your doctor's advice.

If you are also taking a diuretic (water or fluid tablet), you may only need 1 or 2 tablets of Slow-K each day.

When to take it

The tablets are usually taken in 2 or 3 doses during the day.

How to take it

Swallow the tablets whole with a full glass of water or other liquid while sitting upright. Do not crush, chew or suck the tablets.

Take the tablets during meals to lessen the chance of stomach upset.

If you have problems swallowing the tablets or they seem to stick in your throat, check with your doctor.

This could cause irritation that might lead to ulcers.

If you forget to take it

If you miss a dose of Slow-K and you remember within 2 hours, take the missed dose right away. Then continue with your regular schedule.

However, if you do not remember until later, skip the dose you missed and take the next dose according to your regular schedule.

Do not take a double dose to make up for the one that you missed.

This may increase the chance of you getting an unwanted side effect.

If you are not sure what to do, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

If you have trouble remembering when to take your medicine, ask your pharmacist for some hints.

How long to take it

Continue taking Slow-K for as long as your doctor tells you.

Your doctor will check the amount of potassium in your body from time to time to make sure the medicine is working and will discuss with you how long your treatment should continue.

If you take too much (overdose)

Immediately telephone your doctor or the Poisons Information Centre (telephone 13 11 26), or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much Slow-K. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning.

Keep the telephone numbers for these places handy.

Some of the symptoms of an overdose may include difficulty breathing, a drop in blood pressure, fast or irregular heartbeat, numbness or seizures (fits).

While you are taking Slow-K

Things you must do

If you become pregnant while taking Slow-K, tell your doctor immediately.

Your doctor can discuss with you the risks of taking it while you are pregnant.

Be sure to keep all of your doctor's appointments so that your progress can be checked.

Your doctor may want to do blood tests from time to time to make sure your potassium level is right.

If you are about to be started on any new medicine, remind your doctor and pharmacist that you are taking Slow-K.

Tell any other doctor, dentist or pharmacist who treats you that you are taking Slow-K.

Things you must not do

Do not take Slow-K to treat any other complaints unless your doctor tells you to.

Do not give Slow-K to children.

Do not give this medicine to anyone else, even if their symptoms seem similar to yours or they have the same condition as you do.

Side effects

Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking Slow-K.

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. You may need medical treatment if you get some of the side effects.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to answer any questions you may have.

Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following side effects and they worry you:

- nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting
- wind or pain in the abdomen
- diarrhoea
- hives, itchy skin rash

Slow-K can occasionally cause stomach upset, especially if your digestion is slow.

Stop taking Slow-K and tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if you notice any of the following:

- severe nausea or vomiting
- vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- severe wind or pain in the stomach or abdomen
- diarrhoea with black or blood-stained bowel motions

The above side effects may be serious. You may need urgent medical attention.

Tell your doctor if you notice anything else that is making you feel unwell.

Other side effects not listed above may happen in some people.

Do not be alarmed if you notice what looks like whole tablets in your bowel motions.

Slow-K tablets contain potassium in a special wax core covered with a sugar coating. The sugar coat has dissolved and the potassium has been absorbed into your body. The remaining wax core is "waste" material that passes out in the bowel motions.

After using Slow-K

Storage

- Keep your tablets in the container until it is time to take them.
- Store the tablets in a cool dry place away from direct sunlight.
- Do not store Slow-K or any other medicine in the bathroom or near a sink.
- Do not leave the tablets in the car or on window sills.
Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines. Slow-K will keep well if it is cool and dry.

Keep the tablets where children cannot reach them.

A locked cupboard at least one-and-a-half metres above the ground is a good place to store medicines.

Disposal

If your doctor tells you to stop taking Slow-K or it has passed its expiry date, ask your pharmacist what to do with any medicine you have left over.

Product description

What it looks like

Slow-K tablets: round, shiny, pale orange, sugar-coated tablets without markings; containers of 100 tablets.

Ingredients

Slow-K tablets contain 600 mg of potassium chloride as the active ingredient, equivalent to approximately 315 mg (8 mEq) of potassium ion (K⁺), in a slow-release wax core.

They also contain:

- cetostearyl alcohol
- gelatin
- magnesium stearate
- acacia
- titanium dioxide
- talc
- sucrose

- iron oxide red CI 77491
- iron oxide yellow CI 77492
- carnauba wax

Sponsor

Slow-K is supplied in Australia by:

NOVARTIS Pharmaceuticals
Australia Pty Limited
ABN 18 004 244 160
54 Waterloo Road
Macquarie Park NSW 2113
Telephone: 1 800 671 203

® = Registered Trademark

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