

What is norethisterone?

Norethisterone is a tablet that contains 5mg of a synthetic form of the hormone progesterone.

What is norethisterone used for?

Norethisterone is a medicine in tablet form that is often prescribed to women who want to delay their menstruation. At Swift Pharmacy we prescribe norethisterone only for period delay. You can use norethisterone to delay your period for 7, 17 or up to 27 days for a special event or holiday.

How does norethisterone work?

Norethisterone is a synthetic form of the natural hormone progesterone. It works by stopping you ovulating so that your womb lining does not shed. Periods are triggered every month by a drop in progesterone levels. By keeping your progesterone hormone level high, you can delay your period.

How to take norethisterone

You should begin taking norethisterone three days before your period is meant to start.

Take a single 5mg tablet three times a day to delay your period (each tablet is taken roughly 8 hours apart). You can take norethisterone for up to 27 days. Once you stop taking the tablets, your period will then begin 2-3 days later.

If you're wondering how quickly norethisterone stops bleeding, it should be taken in advance of your period before you've started bleeding. If you're not sure what day your period will start, start taking the tablets on the earliest day it's likely to begin.

If you take norethisterone less than three days before your period, or when your period has already started, it may not work and you may still experience spotting or bleeding.

Norethisterone dosage

Norethisterone comes in 5mg tablets which are taken three times a day, three days before your period is meant to start.

If you miss a tablet, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it's almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular schedule. Do not take more than one tablet at a time.

Is norethisterone effective?

If taken as prescribed, norethisterone is effective at delaying your period for short periods of time. However, it's important that you take the medication as instructed and don't skip any tablets or start the treatment later than 3 days before your period would normally start.

Period delay tablets such as norethisterone are more effective in delaying the periods for some women than others. For advice on what is the most effective form of period delay for you, take a look at our [period delay service](#).

What are the main side effects of norethisterone?

Side effects from norethisterone are unusual but you may notice some spotting, irregular bleeding, sore breasts, stomach ache, and a lower sex drive. The longer you delay your period – up to the maximum of 27 days – the more likely you'll experience side effects.

Blood clots are a rare side effect of norethisterone. Stay active and well hydrated while you take this medicine. Keep in mind symptoms of blood clots which can occur in different parts of the body: blood clots in the leg usually show up as painful tenderness and swelling in the calf. In the lungs and head blood clots can cause a sudden and severe chest pain, unusually severe headache or changes in vision. In extremely rare cases, there can be sudden shortness of breath or a sudden inability to speak. If you notice any of these, please seek urgent medical attention.

Using norethisterone can also worsen migraine, diabetes, asthma, depression, and epilepsy. This isn't common, given the short amount of time you take it, but there is a small risk.

Norethisterone isn't for everyone. If you have a BMI of over 35, suffer from migraines or epilepsy, we might suggest you try a different treatment to delay your period. Contact our clinicians to discuss your suitability and other possible period delay treatments.

Please read the [Patient Information Leaflet](#) that comes with your medicine for full details of side effects and how to take norethisterone.

What else should I know about norethisterone?

Norethisterone is not a contraceptive and will not stop you from becoming pregnant. To prevent pregnancy while taking norethisterone, you should use a contraceptive method such as the contraceptive pill, a coil, implant or condoms.

If you're pregnant, or think that you might be pregnant or are trying to conceive, you shouldn't take norethisterone. You should also avoid taking norethisterone if you're breastfeeding.

Norethisterone is not suitable if you're taking a combined contraceptive pill, or if you're using the contraceptive ring or patch. If your contraception contains a progestogen then there is a higher likelihood of side effects while using norethisterone.

If you're currently on HRT (hormone replacement therapy), you can't use norethisterone to skip a period. There are other treatments that can be used alongside HRT to delay your period. Contact our clinical team for advice on delaying your period if you're unable to take norethisterone.

What are alternative period delay treatments?

If you're currently taking a combined contraceptive pill, you can skip a period by taking two packs back to back and missing out your pill-free week. This keeps your hormone levels high and stops your period from happening.

It's important to note that if you're taking a progestogen-only pill (or mini pill), this method won't stop you from having your period. Progestogen-only pills are taken without a break between packs and are designed so that you have a normal period while taking the tablets continuously (although not all women do). If you're currently taking progestogen-only pills and do get periods, you can take norethisterone to delay a period.

What are the non-drug alternatives to norethisterone?

There are no non-drug alternatives that you can use to delay your period. Your period is triggered by a natural drop in your body's hormone levels, specifically progesterone. The only way to keep this from happening, and to delay your period, is to keep your hormone levels artificially high for a short time. To keep hormone levels high enough to delay a period, you need to take a synthetic form of progesterone.

Where can I buy norethisterone tablets?

Norethisterone tablets can't be bought over the counter, this is a prescription only medication.

You can [click here](#) for our period delay service and book with a qualified pharmacist who will make sure that it's suitable for you.

Using contraception on norethisterone

Norethisterone is not a contraceptive. If you don't want to get pregnant, make sure you have other contraceptive measures in place.

Norethisterone is only meant to be used to delay your period for a special occasion, it's not meant for regular use. If you want to regulate your periods better or stop them more often, talk to us about oral contraceptives you could possibly take for this.

Does norethisterone cause weight gain?

In some cases, norethisterone can cause weight gain or bloating. This is most likely caused by the increase in hormone levels causing your body to retain water and will likely normalise once you've stopped treatment.

Does norethisterone reset your cycle?

Once you stop taking norethisterone, your period should arrive within 2-3 days. Some women find that their cycle changes after using norethisterone. If you're concerned about changes to your cycle, please contact us through your online patient record or talk to your regular healthcare provider.

Can you drink alcohol on norethisterone?

It's okay to drink alcohol when taking norethisterone. However, if you drink too much and are sick (vomit) within two hours of taking a tablet, it could affect how well the treatment works as the tablet won't have had time to be absorbed into your system.