



see if it may be the result of the medication. Your doctor may advise you to stop taking the pills for a few days to see if the problem clears up, then restart to see whether the problem recurs. If it does, you and the doctor will need to discuss whether the benefits of the medication are worth enduring the side effects. The doctor also may be able to reduce or eliminate the side effects by adjusting the dosage you are using or by having you divide the dose and take the medication a little at a time.

MEDICAL, SURGICAL AND  
COSMETIC SPECIALISTS

Paula Nelson, M.D.  
Felicity Warren, M.D.  
Mary Ellen Luchetti, M.D.  
Yvette George, M.D.  
Cynthia A. Abbott, M.D.  
George D. Miller, M.D.  
John F. O'Brien, M.D.  
Shelly M. Hall, M.D.  
W. Harvey Cabaniss, Jr., M.D.  
Keith R. Harris, M.D., M.P.H.  
Wakitha Griffin, M.D.  
James A. Rooney, M.D.

629 Beaver Ruin Road  
Suite B  
Lilburn, Georgia 30047  
770-921-4300

2550 Windy Hill Road  
Suite 103  
Marietta, Georgia 30067  
770-952-0050

970 Joe Frank Harris Parkway  
Suite 330  
Cartersville, Georgia 30120  
770-382-2230

302 West 6th Street  
Rome, Georgia 30165  
706-291-0505

1150 Hammond Drive  
Suite A-1120  
Atlanta, Georgia 30328  
770-392-1117

1010 Prince Avenue  
Suite 186  
Athens, Georgia 30606  
706-549-7108

Fax 770-381-6451  
[www.myfamilyderm.com](http://www.myfamilyderm.com)

## Aldactone (Spironolactone)

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Spironolactone was developed as a diuretic (water pill) and anti-hypertensive, which means it is supposed to increase the output of urine and lower blood pressure. It does this by blocking a hormone which regulates salt and water balance in the body. It also has a very useful side effect: It blocks the effects of male hormones, making it useful for treating:

- Excess facial hair
- Excess body hair
- Acne
- Scalp hair loss in women

### Precautions:

Before using Spironolactone, you should alert your Family Dermatology doctor if you:

- Are allergic to any medicine
- Are breast feeding
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant while taking this medicine
- Have a family history of breast cancer
- Are taking any other prescription or non-prescription medication, or have any other medical problems.

If a female taking Spironolactone becomes pregnant, there is a theoretical possibility that a male fetus could have delayed development of male organs. Therefore, this medicine should not be used if there is a risk of pregnancy. Female patients of child-bearing age who are sexually active are recommended to practice "double contraception," using multiple methods of contraception since no single method is 100 percent effective.

You may be asked to take a blood and urine test before this medication is started and again after you have been using the medication for about one month.

### Side effects:

Known side effects associated with Spironolactone include:

- Elevated serum potassium levels. Please be sure your Family Dermatology doctor is aware if you are on other "water pills" or if you have had any kidney problems now or in the past.
- Breast tenderness or breast enlargement, especially in women with smaller breasts. This usually passes with time.
- Nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite. This occurs in about 10 percent of patients and can usually be minimized by taking the medication with food or at night.
- Dizziness when standing up quickly. This side effect is the result of reduced blood pressure. Less than 2 percent of patients find it necessary to discontinue the medication for this reason. Headaches, drowsiness and confusion have also rarely been reported.
- Changes in menstrual cycle. Some women experience mid-cycle spotting, prolonged flow, shorter cycles or sometimes normalization of abnormal cycles. This is not usually a problem for patients using birth control pills.
- Headaches. This is a rare side effect. It can usually be controlled by ensuring adequate fluid intake. Remember, caffeine present in tea, coffee and soft drinks can dehydrate the body and increase the risk of headaches, nausea and dizziness.

As with any medication, there are many other possible side effects that can occur. If you notice anything unusual while taking Spironolactone, check with your Family Dermatology doctor to

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