

ETOPOSIDE CAPSULES

Other names: VP-16, Vepesid®



Important note: The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

Why you are taking this medication

Etoposide (ee-TOP-aw-side) is a medicine that is used to treat many kinds of cancer. It is a pink capsule that you take by mouth.

Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or allergic reaction to etoposide before taking etoposide.

Take etoposide at the same time each day exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Etoposide is preferably taken on an empty stomach with a glass of water; it may be taken with food if needed.

If you vomit within one hour of taking etoposide, check with your doctor. You will be told whether to take the dose again or to wait until your next scheduled dose.

For once a day dosing: If you miss a dose of etoposide, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.

Store etoposide capsules out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.

A blood test may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on your test results and/or other side effects.

Tell other doctors or dentists that you are being treated with etoposide before you receive any treatment from them.

Other medication

Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice - starting three days before and ending one day after your etoposide dose, as these may interact with etoposide.

Other medicines may interact with etoposide. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new medicines.

You can take alcohol in small amounts. Small amounts of alcohol do not affect the safety or usefulness of etoposide.

Pregnancy and breast feeding

Etoposide may cause sterility in men and menopause in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with etoposide.

It is best to use birth control while being treated with etoposide. Etoposide may damage sperm and may be harmful to the baby if used during pregnancy.

Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant.

Do not breast feed during treatment.

Side effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment. Many people have little or no nausea.	You may be given an anti-nausea medicine with your treatment and a prescription to take at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred so follow directions closely. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts.
Loss of appetite and weight loss may occur.	Eat often in small amounts.
Taste alteration may occur.	
Diarrhoea may occur.	If diarrhoea is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods.
Constipation may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise if you can. • Drink plenty of fluids (8 cups per day).
Tiredness and lack of energy may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.
Your white blood cells will decrease 7-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 3 weeks after your last treatment. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.	To help prevent infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the toilet. • Take care of your skin and mouth. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Call your doctor immediately at the first sign of infection such as fever (over 38°C), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
<p>Your platelets may decrease 9-16 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 3 weeks after your last treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself.</p> <p>You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing it gently, do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene. <p>Some medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not stop taking any medicines that has been prescribed for you. • For minor pain, try paracetamol first.
<p>Sore mouth may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat.</p> <p>Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with half a teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day. • Try soft, bland foods like puddings, milkshakes and cream soups. • Avoid spicy, crunchy or acidic food, and very hot or cold foods.
<p>Hair loss is common and may begin within a few days or weeks of treatment. Your hair may thin or you may become totally bald. Your scalp may feel tender. You may lose hair on your face and body. Your hair will grow back once your treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. The colour and texture of your new hair may change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle baby shampoo and soft brush. • Avoid hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms. • Protect your scalp with a hat, scarf or wig in cold weather. • Cover your head or apply sun-block on sunny days. • Apply mineral oil (liquid paraffin) to your scalp to reduce itching. • If you lose your eyelashes and eyebrows, protect your eyes from dust and grit with a broad-rimmed hat and glasses.

Stop taking etoposide and see your doctor or get emergency help immediately if you have:

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 38°C); chills; cough; sore throat; pain or burning when you pass urine; redness, pain or swelling of any area of your body; sores forming anywhere on your body.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black tarry stools (bowel motions); blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin, extensive bruising.

See your doctor as soon as possible (during office hours) if you have:

- Signs of **anaemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- **Numbness** or **tingling** in fingers and toes.

Check with your doctor if any of the following continue or bother you:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Difficulty swallowing the capsules.

Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist