

MELPHALAN

Other names: Alkeran®



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

Melphalan (MEL-fa-lan) is a medicine that is used to treat many types of cancer. It is a tablet that you take by mouth.

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

Take melphalan at the same time each day with a full glass of water. Melphalan may be taken with food or on an empty stomach. Taking the dose with food may help if you experience stomach upset. Tablets must be swallowed whole. Do not chew, break or crush the tablets.

Take melphalan exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions.

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

If you miss a dose of melphalan, 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. Contact your doctor during office hours to ask about making up the missing dose.

Store melphalan tablets out of the reach of children, **in the refrigerator**, 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 the test results and/or other side effects.

Talk to your doctor before receiving any immunisations.

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

Other medication

Other drugs may interact with melphalan. 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.

Alcohol (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of melphalan.

Pregnancy and breast feeding

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

It is best to use birth control while being treated with melphalan. Melphalan may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy.

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

Do not breast feed during treatment with melphalan.

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*.

Changes in your blood

This medicine may cause temporary changes in your blood. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by performing blood tests. Adjustment of your treatment may be needed in certain circumstances.

EFFECT ON YOUR BLOOD	WHAT TO DO
<p>Normal white blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection.</p> <p>When they are low you are at greater risk of having an infection.</p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the toilet. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • See your doctor <i>immediately</i> at the first sign of an infection such as fever (a body temperature of 38°C or more using an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
<p>Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury.</p> <p>When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed.</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 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 medication that has been prescribed by a doctor. • For minor pain, try paracetamol first.

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
<p>Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment and may last for 24 hours. Most people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>You may be given a prescription for an antinausea medicine to take at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow the directions closely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat often in small amounts.
<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 ½ 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>Tiredness and lack of energy may sometimes occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.
<p>Hair loss is rare with melphalan. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with melphalan. Colour and texture may change. Hair loss is more common with higher doses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with the use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.

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

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including flushing, fever, rash, itching, dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling or breathing problems.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (a body temperature of 38°C or more using an oral thermometer); shaking chills; cough; severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum), cloudy or foul smelling urine, painful, tender or swollen red skin wounds or sores.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin, extensive bruising.
- Signs of **heart problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat.
- **Seizures** or **loss of consciousness**.
- Signs of **low blood pressure** such as light-headedness, dizziness or fainting.
- Signs of **lung problems** such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing.

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

- **Sore throat or mouth** that makes it difficult to swallow comfortably.
- Signs of **anaemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.
- Signs of **gout** such as joint pain.
- Signs of **bladder problems** such as changes in urination, painful burning sensation, presence of blood or abdominal pain.
- **Numbness or tingling** in hands or feet.

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite or diarrhoea.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.

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