



Bexarotene (Targretin®)

("bek-SAYR-uh-teen")

How drug is given: By mouth

Purpose: Stops the growth of cancer cells in cutaneous T-cell lymphoma and other cancers

How to take this drug

1. Bexarotene comes as a capsule. Take this capsule with water and food.
2. Try to take the medication at the same time every day. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular scheduled dosing.
3. Swallow each capsule whole. Do not open or chew. If you have trouble swallowing the capsule, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.
4. Do not drink **grapefruit juice** or eat **grapefruit**. Also, do not take **St. John's wort**. Consuming these may increase the amount of medication in your body and worsen side effects.

Storage and disposal

1. Store at room temperature, away from heat and moisture.
2. Keep this medicine in its original container, out of reach of children and pets.
3. If you have unused oral chemotherapy pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Do not flush them down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

Things that may occur during treatment

1. This drug may cause an increase in your cholesterol levels. Normal levels usually return after treatment is stopped.
2. Some patients may feel very tired, also known as fatigue. You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise can also help you maintain your energy. (You may also be less interested in doing your usual activities.)

3. In some cases, fatigue may be a sign of hypothyroidism. This is a condition in which your thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone. If you experience this and have other symptoms, such as cold intolerance or modest weight gain, talk to your doctor or nurse. Thyroid function levels may be monitored in your blood.
4. You may get a headache. Please talk to your cancer care team about what you can take for this.
5. Loose stools or diarrhea may occur within a few days after the drug is started. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. It is also important to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24-48 hours, call your cancer care team.
6. You may feel pain or weakness in your joints or muscles. If these bother you, ask your cancer care team what type of drugs you may use to help with this pain.
7. Skin changes, such as dryness or a rash on your body, may occur. Ask your cancer care team what lotions or creams you may use.
8. Your skin may be more sensitive in the sun. Use a sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher when you go outside. Do not go to tanning booths.
9. Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.
10. Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in your:
 - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body
 - Red blood cells, which carry oxygen in your body to help give you energy

If you have a **fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher**, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **call your cancer care team right away**.

11. Fertility and Related Precautions:

- It is very important for women of child-bearing potential to use two forms of birth control if you are having sex, because this drug could harm an unborn baby. Birth control must be used 1 month before starting therapy and for 1 month after stopping the drug. A negative pregnancy test within 1 week before beginning therapy and then monthly is required.
- If you are a man and have sex with a woman who is pregnant, may be pregnant, or can get pregnant, always use a condom during sex. Use a condom during treatment and for at least 1 month after treatment ends.
- Women should not breastfeed while receiving this drug.
- If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.

The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects in this teaching sheet may not be the same ones you experience. Your side effects may be different, depending on how often you receive treatment (your schedule) and how much you receive each time (your dosage). Side effects may also vary if you take other medications. Please talk with your cancer care team if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your cancer care team.

If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your cancer care team right away.

Managing your oral chemotherapy schedule at home can be challenging. To help you with this, consider using tools to help you keep track of your schedule and any side effects you may have. You can find these tools online at www.dana-farber.org/OralChemoDiary.

THIS SPACE RESERVED FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS OR NOTES FOR THE PATIENT AND FAMILY:



Oral Chemotherapy Fact Sheet

Oral chemotherapy medicines are given by mouth in the form of capsules, tablets, or liquid. These safety tips will help you understand what to do when you are taking oral chemotherapy.

Please note: If you are on a clinical trial, you may be given special instructions.

How to take this drug

- Swallow each tablet or capsule whole. Do not break, crush, or chew.
- Prepare your drug away from food and food prep areas.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule.
- Do not double the dose.
- If you are on a clinical trial, you will be given special instructions if you miss a dose.
- If you are unable to swallow the pill, speak with your nurse or pharmacist about other ways to take your medication.
- If you vomit or throw up your medication, call your physician for further instructions.
- Wash your hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken pills (tablets or capsules).

Storage

- Most oral chemotherapy medicine is stored at room temperature, away from excess heat and moisture. You will be told if the medication you are taking needs special storage or handling.
- Keep this medicine in its original container, in a safe place, away from other family medications. All medications need to be kept out of the reach of children and pets.

Disposal

- If you have unused oral chemotherapy pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Do not flush down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

Safe handling of body waste in the home after chemotherapy

- Chemotherapy stays in the body for hours or even days, and is found in vomit, urine, stool, and sweat (body wastes). Special care must be taken to prevent the patient's body waste from coming into accidental contact with the patient or caregiver.

Body wastes

Patient and caregiver:

- You can use the toilet (septic tank or city sewage) as usual. There is no research to support double flushing to prevent accidental contact (although this may be suggested for certain medications). Ask your doctor or nurse what they suggest for your medication.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet. If urine, vomit, or stool gets on your body, wash with soap and water. Always wear gloves when cleaning equipment or disposing waste from a urinal or commode.
- Pregnant caregivers should **not** handle patient body waste.
- It is safe for family and friends to use the same toilet, as long as all body waste is cleaned from the toilet.
- To absorb urine or stool, use a disposable, plastic-backed pad, diaper, or sheet. Change it immediately when soiled. Then wash skin with soap and water.
- If you have an ostomy, you or your caregiver may want to wear gloves when emptying or changing appliances.

Laundry

- Always wear disposable gloves when handling sheets or clothes that have been soiled with body waste.
- Soiled items should be kept and washed separately from the other laundry.

Oral chemotherapy is a serious drug that requires extra caution. If you have questions or concerns about your oral chemotherapy, do not hesitate to call your clinician. For more tips, tools and short videos to help you manage oral chemotherapy visit our web page at <http://www.dana-farber.org/oralchemo>

The materials included on this page are for informational purposes only. The content is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.



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