



Chemotherapy: Dabrafenib (Tafinlar®)

Pronounced: *"da-BRAF-e-nib"*

How drug is given: By mouth

Purpose: To stop the growth of cancer cells in melanoma and other cancers.

How to take this drug

- Take this medication on an empty stomach (at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after food).
- Swallow each capsule whole. Do not crush, open, break, or chew. If you are unable to swallow the capsule, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is within 6 hours of your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. **Do not double dose.**
- Dabrafenib can interfere with many drugs, which may change how this works in your body. Talk with your doctor before starting any new drugs, including over-the-counter drugs, natural products, herbal supplements, and vitamins.
- **Do not drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit.** Consuming these may increase the amount of medication in your body and worsen side effects.
- Wash your hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken capsules.

Storage and disposal

- Store at room temperature, away from heat and moisture.
- Keep this medicine in its original container, out of reach of children and pets.
- 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

- This drug may cause a change in your blood sugar. Normal levels usually return after treatment has stopped.
- Some important minerals called electrolytes are found in your blood and body fluids. They can be affected by this medicine. Your cancer care team will check your blood work periodically to monitor your potassium and phosphorus levels.
- You may get a headache. Talk with your cancer care team about what you can take for this.
- 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.

- This medicine may reduce the number of healthy red blood cells in your body. This can lead to anemia. Symptoms can begin with tiredness and progress to severe dizziness and shortness of breath. Call your cancer care team right away if you have shortness of breath, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or confusion.
- Mild to moderate nausea and vomiting may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.
- Some of your hair may fall out with treatment. You may lose hair on your head, as well as facial and body hair.
- If you develop a new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, tell your cancer care team.
- 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.
- If you have an **ongoing fever** of 100.5° F (38° C) or higher, be sure to drink plenty of fluids. If you become dizzy or lightheaded, call your cancer care team right away.
- Your liver may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your liver function.
- The palms of your hands or the soles of your feet may become red and painful. This is called hand-foot syndrome. Tingling and peeling of the skin may occur. Avoid tight fitting shoes. Use thick (moisturizing) creams on hands and feet.
- Skin changes, such as dryness, thickening, or rash, may occur on your body. Ask your cancer care team what lotions or creams you may use.
- In rare cases, you may be at risk of getting another type of cancer after taking dabrafenib. Check your skin for new warts, skin sores or bumps that bleed or do not heal, and changes in size or color of a mole. Your doctor should check your skin before you start dabrafenib and every two months during treatment.

Sexual health and reproductive concerns

If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team. It is not safe to take this medicine during pregnancy. It could harm an unborn baby.

Women

- To keep from getting pregnant, use a barrier form of effective birth control and keep using it for at least 2 weeks after you stop treatment.
- Barrier methods of birth control prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. Discuss with your cancer team which type of barrier method is best for you. Some barrier methods are cervical caps, female/male condoms, and diaphragms with spermicides. Some are available over-the-counter; others must be prescribed.
- Women should not breast-feed while receiving this medicine.

Men

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for 2 weeks after stopping the drug if you are having sex with a woman of child-bearing age, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.

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.



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

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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>