



## **Chemotherapy: Everolimus (Afinitor®)**

Pronounced: "e-ver-OH-li-mus"

**How drug is given:** By mouth

**Purpose:** To slow the growth of cancer cells in kidney, liver, breast, neuroendocrine cancers and other cancers

### **How to take this drug**

- May take with or without food but take the same way each day. Take with a full glass of water.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking this medicine before speaking with your cancer care team.
- Swallow each tablet whole. Do not crush or chew. If you have trouble swallowing the tablet, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.
- Everolimus 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.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible if it is less than 6 hours after the time you would have normally taken it. However, if more than 6 hours have passed, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. Do not double dose.
- Wash your hands after taking the medication. Avoiding handling crushed or broken tablets.
- Do not drink **grapefruit juice** or eat **grapefruit**. Also, do not take **St. John's wort**. Consuming these may affect the amount of medication in your body and worsen side effects.

### **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 tablets, 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**

- Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in your:
  - Red blood cells, which carry oxygen in your body to help give you energy
  - Platelets, which help clot the blood to stop bleeding
  - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body

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**.

- This drug may cause a change in your blood sugar and/or cholesterol levels. Normal levels usually return after treatment is stopped.
- Wounds you have may heal more slowly than normal. If you notice changes in any surgical wounds, please talk to your cancer care team. Tell your cancer care team if you have any upcoming surgeries.
- Your kidney may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your kidney function.
- You may get mouth pain or mouth sores. Mouth rinses may be ordered by your doctor before you start treatment. You may have a burning feeling and redness inside the mouth or on the lips. Check with your cancer care team before having any dental work done.
- You **may be more likely to develop an infection**, such as pneumonia, or a bacterial, fungal or viral infection.
- 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 calcium, potassium, magnesium, and phosphorus levels.
- 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. Be sure to also drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, **call your cancer care team**.
- Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. Nausea medication can help with this.
- If you develop a new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, tell your cancer care team.
- 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.
- Your liver may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your liver function.
- You may develop joint pain, Ask your cancer care team what medications you can use.

### Sexual health and fertility 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 months 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 breastfeed while receiving this medicine.

### Men

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for 4 weeks after stopping the drug, if you are having sex with a woman of childbearing 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 listed 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 are taking other medications. Please speak 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 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](http://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>