



Fluorouracil (Acrucil®, 5-FU) ("FLURE oh UE ra sil")

How drug is given: by vein (IV)

Purpose: to kill cancer cells in colon cancer, rectal cancer, pancreatic cancer, gastric cancer, breast cancer, head and neck cancers, and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours after each treatment

- Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

1. Loose stools or diarrhea can 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, tell your doctor or nurse.
2. 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
 - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body
 - Platelets, which help clot the blood to stop bleeding

This may happen 7 to 14 days after the drug is given and then blood counts should return to normal. If you have a **fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher**, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **call** your doctor or nurse **right away**.

3. You may get mouth sores 7 to 10 days after this drug is given. It is important to keep your mouth clean. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush when brushing your teeth. You may have a burning feeling and redness inside the mouth or on the lips. Use a **baking soda mouth rinse** 4 or 5 times a day.

Mouth Rinse Recipe:

Mix: 1 tsp **salt or baking soda** with 8 oz. glass of **water**

Other mouth rinses may be ordered by your doctor. Do not use mouth washes that have alcohol in them because they will dry out the mouth. If you cannot eat or swallow because of this, let your doctor or nurse know. Check with your doctor before having any dental work done.

4. Some or all of your hair may fall out around 3 to 4 weeks after treatment starts. You may lose hair on your head as well as facial and body hair. You may want to buy a wig before hair loss begins. Hair may grow back during treatment.
5. You may see changes in your skin and nails. Sunlight may cause your skin to burn easier, so be sure to use a sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher when you go outside. Do not go to tanning booths.
6. Your eyes may get itchy and watery. Bright light may bother you. Natural tears or saline eye drops can help with these symptoms.
7. The palms of your hands or the soles of your feet may become red and painful (called hand-foot syndrome). Tingling and peeling of the skin can occur. This happens more often with long infusions. Avoid tight fitting shoes and moisturize your hands and feet.
8. Rarely, some people's risk of heart problems may become higher, including having a heart attack, heart failure, or stroke. Call your physician and go to the emergency room **right away** if you **have any of these symptoms**: chest pain, shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, changes in eyesight, a very bad headache, or major weakness.

Things that may occur after your treatment ends (even months to years later)

1. Fertility and Related Precautions:
 - It is still very important to use birth control if you are having sex, because this drug could hurt an unborn baby.
 - Men can become sterile and may want to think about sperm banking prior to chemotherapy.
 - For women, your period (menstrual cycle) may not be regular for a while or may stop completely and you may not be able to get pregnant.
 - Women should not breast-feed while receiving this drug.
 - If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

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 doctor or nurse if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your health care team.

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

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