



Chemotherapy: Hydroxyurea (Hydrea®)

Pronounced: *"hy-drox-ee-yoo-REE-uh"*

How drug is given: By mouth

Purpose: To treat chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) and acute myelogenous leukemia (AML)

How to take the drug by mouth:

- Swallow each capsule whole. Do not crush or chew them. If you are unable to swallow the capsule, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.
- Take with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take 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 dose.**
- Wash your hands before and after handling your medication.

Storage:

- 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:

- Some patients may have mild nausea. Drugs to help with this may be given to you.
- Drowsiness, dizziness, or headaches can occur, but usually will not last more than 24 hours. Please avoid driving or operating machinery.
- Skin changes, such as dryness, a rash, or darkening of skin color, can occur on your body. Sunlight may cause your skin to burn more easily, so use a sunscreen of SPF 30 or greater when you go outside.
- 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

If you have a **fever of 100.5°F (39°C) or higher**, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **call your cancer team right away.**

- You may get some hair thinning.
- You may get mouth sores 7 to 10 days after this drug is given. It is important to keep your mouth clean. A soft-bristle toothbrush should be used for 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 mouthwashes that have alcohol in them, because they will dry out the mouth. If you cannot eat or swallow because of this, let your cancer care team know. Check with cancer care team before having any dental work done.

- 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 constipation may occur during treatment.
 - Drink plenty of fluids and increase fiber in your diet by eating fresh fruits and vegetables.
 - A daily stool softener, such as docusate (Colace[®]), and/or laxatives, such as senna (Senokot[®]), may help. If these do not help within 48 hours, call your cancer care team.
 - Do not use bulk-forming laxatives such as Metamucil[®] without first talking with your cancer care team.

Sexual health and fertility

If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.

Women

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for at least 6 months after your last dose if you are having sex, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
- 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.
- 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 drug.

Men

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for at least 1 year after your last dose if you are having sex with a woman of child-bearing age, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.

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

The information in this document includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects listed here 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.



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>