



Melphalan (Alkeran®)

(*MEL-fa-lan*)

How drug is given: By vein (IV)

Purpose: To stop the growth of cancer cells in multiple myeloma, ovarian, and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours after treatment

1. If the drug leaks out of the vein into the tissue while it is being given, it can cause harm. This is called extravasation. If you feel any burning or tingling in the area of your IV, please let your nurse know **right away**.

Swelling, redness, blisters or bruising around the area of the IV or port may occur one or two weeks after getting this drug. Call your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.

2. 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. Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in :
 - 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 cancer care team right away**.

2. 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**.

3. 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.
4. Loss of appetite may occur; this may lead to weight loss. Talk to your cancer care team if you have any questions or concerns.
5. 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.
6. 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 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.

Things that may occur after 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 since this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
 - Men may 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.
2. In very rare cases, you could get a second cancer years after taking melphalan.

The above information includes some, but 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 about your treatment and side effects you may experience during and after treatment.

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: