



Tretinoin (ATRA, Vesanoïd®)

("treh-tih-NO-in")

How this drug is given: By mouth

Purpose: Slows the growth of cancer cells in leukemia and other cancers

How to take the drug by mouth

- Take with a meal.
- Swallow this capsule whole. Do not crush or chew. If you have trouble swallowing the capsule, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.
- 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 dose.**
- Wash hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken capsules.

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 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

1. Flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and/or joint aches, are common. If these occur, your doctor may suggest taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help control the symptoms. Please let your cancer care team know if acetaminophen (Tylenol) does not help, since other medications may be prescribed.
2. Some patients may have mild nausea. You may be given medicine to help with this.
3. Mild constipation may occur after treatment begins. Please increase your fluid intake 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 (Senakot®), may be helpful. If these do not

help within 48 hours, tell your cancer care team. Do not use bulk-forming laxatives such as Metamucil® without first talking with your cancer care team.

4. 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.**
5. Your body may not be able to get rid of extra fluid. This is called edema. You may notice some swelling in your arms or legs.
6. 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.
7. Eyes may get itchy and watery and bright light may bother you. Natural tears or saline eye drops may help with these symptoms.
8. You may have a fast or unusual heartbeat. If you feel any strange changes in your heartbeat, tell your doctor or nurse **right away.**
9. 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 be helpful in maintaining your energy.
10. Restlessness, sedation, depression, or confusion can occur. You may notice a change in your mood. Tell your cancer care team if you have any of these symptoms after starting the drug.
11. In rare instances of leukemia (APL), an increase in your white blood cells may occur, causing high fever, respiratory distress, lung infection, and heart changes.

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

Fertility and Related Precautions:

- It is very important to use birth control if you are having sex, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
- Women should not breastfeed while receiving this drug.
- If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.

The information in this document 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 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.

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 Fact Sheet

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>



The materials included on this page are for informational purposes only. The content is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

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

