



For the Patient: Etoposide Capsules
Other names: Vepesid®, VP-16

BC Cancer Agency

- Etoposide (ee-TOP-aw-side) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancers. It is a pink capsule that you take by mouth.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to etoposide before taking etoposide.
- **Take** etoposide at the same time each day exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Etoposide is preferably taken on an empty stomach with a glass of water; it may be taken with food if needed. Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice for 48 hours before and on day of your etoposide dose as it may interact with etoposide.
- If you **vomit** within 1 hour of taking etoposide, check with your doctor. You will be told whether to take the dose again or to wait until the next scheduled dose.
- For once a day dosing: If you **miss a dose** of etoposide, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.
- **Store** etoposide capsules out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.
- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Other drugs such as atovaquone (Mepron®), warfarin (Coumadin®), glucosamine and St John's Wort may **interact** with etoposide. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of etoposide.
- Etoposide may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with etoposide.
- Etoposide may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with etoposide. Tell your doctor right

away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.

- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with etoposide before you receive any treatment from them.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment. Many people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Control Nausea</i>.
<p>Your white blood cells will decrease 7-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 3 weeks after your last treatment. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.</p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom. • Take care of your skin and mouth. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Call your doctor immediately at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
<p>Your platelets may decrease 9-16 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 3 weeks after your last treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently, do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • For minor pain, take acetaminophen (eg, Tylenol®). Do not take ASA (eg, Aspirin®) or ibuprofen (eg, Advil®).
<p>Hair loss is common and may begin within a few days or weeks of treatment. Your hair may thin or you may become totally bald. Your scalp may feel tender. You may lose hair on your face and body. Your hair will grow back once your treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms. • Protect your scalp with a hat, scarf or wig in cold weather. Some extended health plans will pay part of the cost of a wig. • Cover your head or apply sunblock on sunny days.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply mineral oil to your scalp to reduce itching. • If you lose your eyelashes and eyebrows, protect your eyes from dust and grit with a broad-rimmed hat and glasses.
<p>Loss of appetite and weight loss may occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try ideas in <i>High Energy High Protein Ideas</i> and in <i>Healthy Eating Using High Energy, High Protein Foods</i>.
<p>Taste alteration may occur.</p>	<p>To help reduce the impact of taste changes on your ability to get good nutrition and avoid weight loss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not eat 1-2 hours before chemotherapy and up to 3 hours after therapy. It is common to develop a taste aversion to foods eaten during this time, so it is particularly important to avoid your favourite foods. • Rinse mouth with water before eating. • Eat small, frequent meals and healthy snacks. • Eat meals when hungry rather than at set mealtimes. • Have others prepare the meal. • Substitute poultry, fish, eggs and cheese for red meat. • Eat meat with a marinade or sauce; try something sweet. • Use plastic utensils if food tastes like metal. • Use mints, lemon drops or chewing gum to mask the bitter or metallic taste. • Chilled or frozen food may be more acceptable than warm or hot food. • Try tart foods, such as citrus fruits or lemonade, unless you have mouth sores. • Avoid bad odors, as these may affect your appetite.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Diarrhea may occur.	To help diarrhea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food ideas to help with diarrhea during chemotherapy</i>
Constipation may occur.	To help constipation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise if you can. • Drink plenty of fluids (8 cups a day). • Try ideas in <i>Suggestions for Dealing with Constipation</i>
Tiredness and lack of energy may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Try the ideas in <i>Your bank of energy savings: How people with cancer can handle fatigue</i>.
Sore mouth may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day. • Try soft, bland foods like puddings, milkshakes and cream soups. • Avoid spicy, crunchy or acidic food, and very hot or cold foods. • Try ideas in the two handouts; <i>easy to chew recipes</i> and <i>soft, moist food ideas</i>

STOP TAKING ETOPOSIDE AND SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer); chills; cough; sore throat; pain or burning when you pass urine; redness, pain or swelling of any area of your body; sores forming anywhere on your body.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin, extensive bruising.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- **Numbness** or tingling in feet or hands.

