



For the Patient: Amsacrine

Other names: AMSA PD®

BC Cancer Agency

- **Amsacrine** (AM-sa-krin) is a drug that is used to treat some types of cancer. It is a clear orange-red liquid that is injected into a vein.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to amsacrine or acriflavine before receiving amsacrine.
- 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 may **interact** with amsacrine. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start or stop taking any other drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of amsacrine.
- It is not known if amsacrine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with amsacrine. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors, dentists, and other health professionals that you are being treated with amsacrine 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
Amsacrine burns if it leaks under the skin.	Tell your nurse or doctor immediately if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.
Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment and may last for several hours. Most 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 fluids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Help Control Nausea</i>.*
<p>Skin rashes may rarely occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If rash is accompanied by signs of an allergic reaction such as flushing, dizziness, swelling, or breathing problems, call your doctor immediately. • If itching is very irritating, call your doctor. Otherwise, be sure to mention it at your next visit.
<p>Fever may rarely occur. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day. • If you have fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer) plus another sign of infection, call your doctor immediately. Other signs of infection include chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
<p>Your urine may be orange or reddish for 1-2 days after your treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is expected as amsacrine is orange-red coloured and is passed in your urine. • If you notice blood in your urine, call your doctor immediately.
<p>Diarrhea may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>If diarrhea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of fluids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Diarrhea During Chemotherapy</i>.*
<p>Pain or swelling in the rectal area or buttocks may rarely occur. Pain or swelling may be accompanied by fever, a lump in the rectal area, or painful bowel movements.</p>	<p>Report this to your doctor immediately.</p>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Your white blood cells may decrease 11-13 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 17-25 days 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. • 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 12-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 21-25 days 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. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene. <p>Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g., ASA for your heart). • For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) first, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.
<p>Sore mouth may sometimes 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.</p>	<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 the ideas in <i>Food Ideas for a Sore Mouth During Chemotherapy</i>.*
<p>Loss of appetite and weight loss are common and may persist after discontinuation of amsacrine.</p>	<p>Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i>.*</p>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Tiredness and lack of energy may sometimes occur.</p>	<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 to Energy Savings: How People with Cancer Can Handle Fatigue</i>.*
<p>Hair loss is common and may begin within a few days or weeks of treatment. Your hair may thin or you may lose it completely. Your scalp may feel tender. Hair loss may occur on your face and body. Hair will grow back once your treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<p>Refer to <i>For the Patient: Hair loss due to chemotherapy</i>.* You may also want to:</p> <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.

***Please ask your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist for a copy.**

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), shaking chills; severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum); cloudy or foul smelling urine; painful, tender, or swollen red skin wounds or sores.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.
- **Pain or swelling** in the rectal area or buttocks.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- Signs of **heart or lung problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, swelling of feet or lower legs, or fainting.
- **Seizures or loss of consciousness.**

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

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.
- **Numbness or tingling** in feet or hands.
- Signs of **gout** such as joint pain.
- **Changes in eyesight.**
- Increased **sore throat or mouth** that makes it difficult to swallow comfortably.

