Etoposide capsules

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** starting 3 days before and ending 1 day after your etoposide dose, as these 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIDE EFFECTS</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
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| **Nausea and vomiting** may occur after your treatment. Many people have little or no nausea. | 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.  
  • Drink plenty of liquids.  
  • Eat and drink often in small amounts.  
  • Try the ideas in *Food Choices to Control Nausea.* |
| **Loss of appetite** and **weight loss** may occur. | • Try the ideas in *High Energy High Protein Ideas* and in *Healthy Eating Using High Energy, High Protein Foods.* |
| **Taste** alteration may occur. | • Try the ideas in *Food Ideas to Cope with Taste and Smell Changes.* |
| **Diarrhea** may occur. | If diarrhea is a problem:  
  • Drink plenty of liquids.  
  • Eat and drink often in small amounts.  
  • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in *Food Ideas to Help with Diarrhea During Chemotherapy.* |
| **Constipation** may occur. | • Exercise if you can.  
  • Drink plenty of fluids (8 cups a day).  
  • Try ideas in *Suggestions for Dealing with Constipation.* |
| **Tiredness** and lack of energy may occur. | • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.  
  • Try the ideas in *Your Bank of Energy Savings: How People with Cancer Can Handle Fatigue.* |
### SIDE EFFECTS

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|To help prevent infection: | - 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. |

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|To help prevent bleeding problems: | - 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.  
- Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.  
- 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, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable. |

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|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. | - 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; **Easy to Chew Recipes** and **Soft, Moist Food Ideas.** |

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**SIDE EFFECTS**

**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.

**MANAGEMENT**

Refer to *For the Patient: Hair loss due to chemotherapy.* You may also want to:
- 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.*

**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.

**CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:**

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on you lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Difficulty swallowing the capsules.

**REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR**