



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.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
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. <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>.*
Loss of appetite and weight loss may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try the ideas in <i>High Energy High Protein Ideas</i> and in <i>Healthy Eating Using High Energy, High Protein Foods</i>.*
Taste alteration may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Cope with Taste and Smell Changes</i>.*
Diarrhea may occur.	If diarrhea is a problem: <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.	<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>.*

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<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 <i>immediately</i> 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. • 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, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.
<p>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.</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 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>.*

