

## Medication Information Sheet

## hydroxyurea (Hi-drox-ee-your-EE-ah)

*This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.*

**Other Name:** Generic brand(s) available, Hydrea®

**Appearance:** capsule

### What is this medication for?

- For treating head and neck cancer, blood cancers (leukemias) and skin cancer (melanoma).

### What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor if you have/had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have or had HIV or AIDs, kidney or liver problems, a low blood count (anemia), or have any allergies.
- This drug contains a small amount of lactose. If you cannot tolerate lactose, talk to your doctor.
- People with cancer have a higher risk of getting other cancers or developing blood clots. Some cancer medications may increase these risks, especially if used for a long period of time. Discuss any concerns about this medication with your health care team.

### How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- The use of this medication in men or women may cause harm to the unborn baby if pregnancy occurs. Let your health care team know if you or your partner is pregnant, becomes pregnant during treatment, or if you are breastfeeding
- If there is ANY chance that you or your partner may become pregnant, you and your partner together must: ► **Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time** while taking this drug: Keep using birth control until at least **12 months** after the last dose (general recommendation). Discuss with your healthcare team.
- Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant.
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug.
- Effects on Fertility: Likely

### How is this medication given?

- Take it exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the instructions.
- Swallow whole with a glass of water, with or without food.
- Handwashing is recommended after handling this medication.

- Take the dose at about the same time each day.
- You should drink extra fluids while on this medication, to pass more urine and help prevent kidney problems, especially when you first start taking this medication.
- If you have trouble swallowing the capsules, you should discuss this with your pharmacist or doctor.
- If you miss a dose, check with your doctor.

## What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- For mild aches and pain:
  - You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets. Ask your health care team about the right dose for you.
  - Talk to your health care team first before starting ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA), since these may increase your chance of bleeding.
  - If you are already taking aspirin regularly, such as for heart conditions; Do not stop it- talk to your health care team first.
  - If you feel unwell, take your temperature before using any of these drugs. They may hide a fever. **Phone your health care team or go to the closest emergency room right away if you have a fever.** See the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.
- Drinking alcohol and smoking during your treatment may increase some side effects and make your medication less effective. Speak to your health care team about smoking and drinking alcohol while on treatment.

## How should I safely store this medication?

- Keep this medication in the original packaging at room temperature in a dry place, away from heat and light. Keep out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Do not throw out any unused drugs at home. Bring them to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

## What are the side effects of this medication?

Common side effects usually occur in more than 1 out of every 10 patients. Other side effects are less common, but may be severe. You may not have all of the side effects below. You may have side effects

that are not listed.

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>More Common Side Effects</b>	
<p><b><i>Unusual bleeding or bruising</i></b></p> <p>You may have black stools, cough up blood, blood in your urine, purple or red dots on your skin or bleeding that will not stop.</p> <p><b><i>Fever, chills, infection</i></b></p> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR</b></li> <li>• <b>38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.</b></li> </ul> <p>While you are getting chemotherapy treatments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a digital thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills).</li> <li>• Avoid taking medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol®, acetaminophen, Advil® or ibuprofen) as they may hide a fever.</li> <li>• Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature.</li> <li>• Wash your hands often.</li> <li>• Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries or visiting your dentist.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a fever, talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room.</b></p> <p>See our <a href="#">Neutropenia (Low white blood cell count)</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>
<p><b><i>Nausea and vomiting (generally mild)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May occur in hours to days after the dose is given/ after treatment starts.</li> <li>• Drink clear fluids and avoid large meals. Get fresh air and rest.</li> <li>• Limit spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell.</li> <li>• Take anti-nausea drug(s) exactly as directed by your doctor. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it.</li> <li>• Contact your doctor if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting for more than 24 hours.</li> <li>• Also see Nausea &amp; Vomiting pamphlet.*</li> </ul>	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

\*The most updated version and more symptom control information can be found on: <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/druginfo>  
 Prepared with input from the Cancer Care Ontario-Medication Information Sheets Working Group.  
 August 2016

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>Less Common Side Effects, but may be Severe</b>	
<b>Liver problems</b> (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, may be severe)	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Dizziness, drowsiness, headache</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery if dizzy.</li> <li>• Try to get up and move slowly.</li> </ul>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<b>Rapid killing of cancer cells when you start treatment may lead to build up of cell waste products</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If mild, this may cause gout, with joint pains, but if severe, may cause fevers, kidney failure, confusion and be life-threatening.</li> <li>• You MUST take the preventive medicines given by your doctor AND</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses per day) and void (urinate) frequently.</li> </ul>	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Pancreas problems</b> (increased pain in centre of belly and may extend to the back, appetite or weight loss)	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Lung problems</b> (increased cough, breathing problems, chest pain, coughing blood)	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Redness/rash in areas where you've previously received radiation (may not be severe)</b>	Contact your health care team as soon as possible
<b>Severe headache, loss of consciousness, seizures, confusion / hallucinations</b>	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Inflammation of blood vessels in the skin</b> (red or purple patches on the skin, rash/patches that do not turn white when pressed)	Contact your health care team as soon as possible

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to [www.cancercare.on.ca/symptoms](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/symptoms).

The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.

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*A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.*