

ORAL CANCER TREATMENT EDUCATION



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CAPECITABINE

Name of your medication

Generic name — capecitabine (ka-peh-SY-tuh-been)
Brand name — Xeloda® (zeh-LOH-duh)

Common uses

Capecitabine is used to treat breast and colorectal cancer.
Capecitabine is also used in combination with other medications to treat gastric, esophageal, and pancreatic cancer.
Capecitabine may also be used for other treatments.

Dose and schedule

Taking capecitabine as instructed is important to allow your treatment to be as effective as possible, so here are some key points to remember.

- Your dose is based on many factors, including your height and weight, overall health, and diagnosis.
- Capecitabine should be taken twice daily with water, within 30 minutes after a meal, at the same time each day.
- Capecitabine should be taken whole and not crushed, cut, or dissolved. If you are unable to swallow capecitabine, talk to your care provider or pharmacist for possible options.
- If you miss a dose of capecitabine, **do not** take an extra dose or two doses at one time. Simply take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Be sure to write down if you miss a dose and let your care provider know about any missed doses.

Storage and handling

Handle capecitabine with care. Just like when chemotherapy is given into the vein, this drug can be toxic, and exposure of the drug to others should be limited.

- Store capecitabine at room temperature (68°F–77°F) in a dry location away from light.
- Keep capecitabine out of reach of children and pets.
- Whenever possible, give capecitabine to yourself and follow the steps below. If a family member, friend, or caregiver needs to give capecitabine to you, they also need to follow these steps:
 1. Wash hands with soap and water.
 2. Put on gloves to avoid touching the medication. (Gloves are not necessary if you give the drug to yourself.)
 3. Gently transfer the capecitabine from its package to a small medicine or other disposable cup.
 4. Administer the medicine immediately by mouth with water.
 5. Remove gloves and do not use them for anything else.
 6. Throw gloves and medicine cup in household trash.
 7. Wash hands with soap and water.

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- If a daily pill box or pill reminder is used, a separate one should be used for capecitabine. **Do not** mix other medications into the box with capecitabine. The person filling the box or reminder should wear gloves (gloves are not necessary if you are filling the box or reminder). When empty, the box or reminder should be washed with soap and water before refilling. Be sure to wash hands with soap and water after the task is complete, whether or not gloves are worn.
- If you have any unused capecitabine, **do not** throw it in the trash and **do not** flush it down the sink or toilet. Talk to your care provider or pharmacist about proper disposal of capecitabine.
- If you are traveling, put your capecitabine in a sealed plastic bag. Ask your pharmacist if any additional travel precautions are needed.

Drug and food interactions

- Capecitabine has many drug interactions. Inform your care providers of all prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal products.
- Talk with your care provider or pharmacist before taking new medications or supplements, or receiving any vaccines.

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Side Effects of Capecitabine

The common side effects that have been known to happen in more than 30% of patients taking capecitabine are listed in the left side of this table. You **MAY NOT** experience these side effects. Options to help manage any side effects that do occur are included on the right side of this table. These should be discussed with your care provider. If you experience any side effect you cannot manage or that is not listed here, contact your care provider.

Possible Side Effect	Management
<p>Decreased white blood cells (WBCs) and increased risk for infection</p>	<p>Your WBCs should be monitored by a simple blood test. When your WBCs are low, you are at a greater risk of having an infection. Take the following precautions to protect yourself from infection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often, especially before eating and after using the bathroom. • Avoid crowds and people with fevers, flu, or other infection. • Bathe regularly to keep good personal hygiene. <p>Contact your care provider if you experience any signs or symptoms of an infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever (temperature more than 100.4°F or 38°C) • Chills • Sore throat • Burning with urination • Unusual tiredness • A sore that becomes red, is draining, or does not heal <p>Check with your care provider before taking any medicine for a fever or chills.</p>
<p>Decreased hemoglobin, part of the red blood cells that carry iron and oxygen</p>	<p>Your hemoglobin should be monitored using a blood test. When your hemoglobin is low, you may notice that you get tired or fatigued more easily.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to get 7–8 hours of sleep per night. • Avoid operating heavy machinery if you feel too tired. • Find a balance between work and rest. • Stay as active as possible, but know that it is okay to rest as needed. • You might notice that you are more pale than usual. <p>Let your healthcare provider know right away if you experience any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath • Dizziness • Palpitations

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Possible Side Effect	Management
<p>Diarrhea (loose and/or urgent bowel movements)</p>	<p>Monitor how many bowel movements you have each day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink 8–10 glasses of water or fluid each day unless your care provider has instructed you to limit your fluid intake. • Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day rather than a few large meals. • Eat bland, low-fiber foods (e.g., bananas, applesauce, potatoes, chicken, rice, toast). • Avoid high-fiber foods (e.g., raw vegetables, raw fruits, whole grains). • Avoid foods that cause gas (e.g., broccoli, beans). • Avoid lactose-containing foods (e.g., yogurt, milk). • Avoid spicy, fried, and greasy foods. <p>Contact your provider if any of the following occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of bowel movements you have in a day increases by four or more. • You feel dizzy or lightheaded. <p>Your care provider may recommend an over-the-counter medication called loperamide (Imodium®) to help with your diarrhea, but talk to your care provider before starting this medication.</p>
<p>Mouth irritation or sores</p>	<p>Practice good mouth care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rinse your mouth frequently. • Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush or cotton swab after meals. • Use a mild nonalcohol mouth rinse at least 4 times a day (after eating and at bedtime). One example is a mixture of 1/8 teaspoon of salt and 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of warm (not hot) water. • If you have sores in your mouth, avoid using tobacco products, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol. <p>Call your care provider if you experience pain or sores in your mouth or throat.</p>
<p>Pain or discomfort in hands and/or feet</p>	<p>Hand-and-foot syndrome (HFS) is a skin reaction that appears on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It can appear as a rash, peeling skin, or a “pins and needles” sensation. Let your care provider know right away if you experience this side effect.</p> <p>To prevent HFS, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your hands and feet moisturized with a non-fragranced moisturizing cream. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urea 10% or 20% cream may be helpful. • Avoid exposure to hot water on the hands and feet, in showers, baths, or while doing dishes. • Avoid tight-fitting shoes or socks. • Avoid excess rubbing on hands and feet unless putting on lotion. • Wear gloves when working with your hands.

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Possible Side Effect	Management
Changes in liver function	<p>Your liver function will be checked periodically by a simple blood test. Contact your care provider if you notice any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellowing of the skin or whites of your eyes • Dark or brown urine • Bleeding or bruising
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat and drink slowly. • Drink 8–10 glasses of water or fluid each day unless your care provider has instructed you to limit your fluid intake. • Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day rather than a few large meals. • Eat bland foods; avoid spicy, fried, and greasy foods. • Avoid vigorous exercise immediately after eating. • Don't lie down immediately after eating. • Avoid strong odors. <p>Let your provider know if you experience nausea or vomiting. Your provider may prescribe medication that can help.</p>
Fatigue	<p>You may be more tired than usual or have less energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay as active as possible, but know it is okay to rest as needed. • Try to do some activity every day. • Plan your activities, and do them at a time of day when you feel a bit more energetic. • Avoid operating heavy machinery if you feel too tired.
Abdominal pain	<p>Abdominal pain/discomfort may occur. Report any serious pain or symptoms to your care provider immediately.</p>
Decreased platelet count and increased risk of bleeding	<p>Your platelets should be monitored by a simple blood test. When they are low, you may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use caution to avoid bruises, cuts, or burns. • Blow your nose gently, and do not pick your nose. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush, and maintain good oral hygiene. • When shaving, use an electronic razor instead of razor blades. • Use a nail file instead of nail clippers. <p>Call your care provider if you have bleeding that won't stop. Examples include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bloody nose that bleeds for more than 5 minutes despite pressure • A cut that continues to ooze despite pressure • Gums that bleed excessively when you floss or brush <p>Seek medical help immediately if you experience any severe headaches, observe blood in your urine or stool, cough up blood, or experience prolonged and uncontrollable bleeding.</p>

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Serious side effects of capecitabine

- You may have an increased risk of bleeding if you take warfarin (Coumadin®) with capecitabine and for up to 1 month after stopping capecitabine therapy.
- Capecitabine can cause cardiotoxicity, which is a condition when there is damage to your heart muscle. Seek medical attention right away if you have any chest pain or tightness.
- Capecitabine may be harmful to your kidneys. Speak to your care team to know when you need to have blood tests to monitor your kidneys. Contact your care team if you notice swelling in your legs and feet or a decreased amount of urination.
- Dehydration happens when you use or lose more water than you take in and your body doesn't have enough water or other fluids to carry out its normal functions. Capecitabine may make you become dehydrated more easily. Talk with your care team about how much fluid you should drink.
- Capecitabine may cause a rash, which means that your skin may be red, dry, itchy, or cracked. Check your skin, and call your care team if you notice any skin changes.
- Dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency is a rare genetic condition where the body cannot break down certain cancer treatments, leading to severe side effects. Talk to your doctor to see if you should be tested.

If you experience ANY uncontrolled side effect, call your physician or healthcare center immediately:

(INSTITUTIONAL CONTACT INFO)

Handling body fluids and waste

Because capecitabine remains in your body for several days after it is taken, some of the drug may be present in urine, stool, sweat, or vomit. Once you have started to take capecitabine, it is important to follow the instructions below every day for as long as your treatment lasts. This is to keep yourself, loved ones, and the environment as safe as possible.

- Pregnant women should avoid touching anything that may be soiled with body fluids from the patient.
- Toilet and septic systems
 - You may use the same toilet, septic tank, and/or sewer that you usually use. If you have a low-flow toilet, close the lid and flush twice to ensure all waste has been discarded.
 - If the toilet or toilet seat becomes soiled with urine, stool, or vomit, clean the surfaces before other people use the toilet.
 - Wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
- If you need a bedpan, be sure your caregiver knows to wear gloves to assist with cleanup and to wash the bedpan with soap and water every day.
- If you do not have good control of bladder or bowels, use a disposable pad with a plastic back, a diaper, or a sheet to absorb body waste.
- Wash any skin that has been exposed to body waste or capecitabine with soap and water.
- Linens or clothing that are soiled with body fluids or body waste should be washed separately from other linens and clothing. If you do not have a washer, place the soiled linens in a plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Wash hands with soap and water after touching linens or clothing that may be soiled with body fluids.

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Pregnancy, sexual activity, and contraception

- Women should not become pregnant and men should not get a partner pregnant while taking capecitabine. Men with female partners of childbearing age and potential should use effective contraception during therapy and for a minimum of 3 months after the last dose of capecitabine. Women of childbearing age and potential should use effective contraception during therapy and for a minimum of 6 months after the last dose of capecitabine.
- Do not breastfeed while taking capecitabine and for 1 week after the last dose of capecitabine.
- Inform your care provider if you become pregnant.
- It is safe to hug and kiss. Special precautions may be needed for sexual activity while on oral chemotherapy, and you are encouraged to ask your care provider.

Obtaining medication

- Talk with your care provider about the process for obtaining your capecitabine.

_____ (PHARMACY OR SPECIALTY PHARMACY CONTACT INFO)

Additional resources

Product website: www.gene.com/patients/medicines/xeloda

Product prescribing information: www.gene.com/download/pdf/xeloda_prescribing.pdf

Product resources: www.gene.com/patients/medicines/xeloda

Updated – November 21, 2024

Additional instructions

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