

ORAL CHEMOTHERAPY EDUCATION



PASSION FOR PATIENTS
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ETOPOSIDE

Name of your medication

Generic name — etoposide (ee-toh-POH-side)
Brand name — VePesid® (ve-Pe-sid)

Approved uses

Etoposide is used to treat adults with small cell lung cancer and testicular cancer.

Dose and schedule

Taking etoposide 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.
- Etoposide should be taken with or without food at the same time each day.
- Etoposide should be taken whole and not crushed, cut, or dissolved. If you are unable to swallow etoposide, talk to your care provider or pharmacist for possible options.
- If you miss a dose of etoposide, **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.

Drug and food interactions

- Etoposide 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.

Storage and handling

Handle etoposide 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 etoposide in the refrigerator (36°F–46°F).
- Keep etoposide out of reach of children and pets.
- Leave etoposide in the provided packaging until it is ready to be taken.
- Whenever possible, you should give etoposide to yourself and follow the steps below. If a family member, friend, or caregiver needs to give the etoposide 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 etoposide from its package to a small medicine or other disposable cup.

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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.
- If a daily pill box or pill reminder will be used, contact your care team before using:
 - 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 etoposide, **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 etoposide.
 - If you are traveling, put your etoposide's packaging in a sealed plastic bag. Ask your pharmacist if any additional travel precautions are needed.

Side Effects of Etoposide

Below are common side effects that have been known to happen in about one third or more of patients taking etoposide are listed on 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

Decreased white blood cells (WBCs) and increased risk of infection

Your WBCs should be monitored by a simple blood test. When your WBCs are low, you are at greater risk for infection. Take the following precautions to protect yourself from infection.

- 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.

Contact your care provider if you experience any signs or symptoms of an infection such as:

- 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

Check with your care provider before taking any medicine for a fever or chills.

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Possible Side Effect	Management
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 lay down immediately after eating. • Avoid strong odors. <p>Let your provider know if you experience nausea or vomiting. Your provider may prescribe medication to help with the nausea or vomiting.</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:</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, blood in your urine or stool, coughing up blood, or prolonged and uncontrollable bleeding.</p> <p>You may need to take a break or hold your medication for medical or dental procedures. Talk to your care provider or dentist before any scheduled procedures.</p>
Hair loss (alopecia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your hair will grow back after treatment is over. • Some people choose to wear scarves, caps, or wigs. • A short haircut prior to treatment may help with the stress of hair loss.

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Possible Side Effect	Management
Decreased hemoglobin, part of the red blood cells that carry iron and oxygen	<p>Your hemoglobin should be monitored by a simple 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, too.• 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

Serious side effects of etoposide

- ❑ Bone marrow suppression is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets and can be severe with etoposide. Speak to your care provider regarding the timing of laboratory tests to monitor your blood cell counts. You also may need to take a break or hold your medication for medical or dental procedures. Talk to your care provider or dentist before any scheduled procedures.

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

(INSTITUTIONAL CONTACT INFO)

Handling body fluids and waste

Etoposide remains in your body for several days after it is taken, so some of the drug may be present in urine, stool, sweat, or vomit. Once you have started to take etoposide, it is important to follow the instructions below every day for as long as your treatment lasts. This will 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 etoposide 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.

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- ❑ Wash hands with soap and water after touching linens or clothing that may be soiled with body fluids.

Pregnancy, sexual activity, and contraception

- ❑ Women should not become pregnant and men should not get a partner pregnant while taking etoposide. Men and women of childbearing age and potential should use effective contraception during therapy and for a minimum of 1 month after the last dose of etoposide.
- ❑ Effective contraception could include one or more of the following: oral contraceptive, barrier methods, etc.
- ❑ Do not breastfeed while taking etoposide and for 1 month after the last dose of etoposide.
- ❑ Inform your care provider if you become pregnant.
- ❑ It is safe to hug and kiss, but special precautions may be needed for sexual activity while on oral chemotherapy. You are encouraged to talk to your care provider.

Obtaining medication

- ❑ Talk with your care provider about how to obtain your etoposide.

(PHARMACY OR SPECIALTY PHARMACY CONTACT INFO)

Additional resources

Product prescribing information: https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2017/020457s016lbl.pdf

Updated – June 20, 2022

Additional instructions

Important notice: The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), National Community Oncology Dispensing Association, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources. This guide does not cover all existing information related to the possible uses, directions, doses, precautions, warnings, interactions, adverse effects, or risks associated with this medication and should not substitute for the advice of a qualified healthcare professional. Provision of this guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring of this medication by ACCC, HOPA, NCODA, or ONS, who assume no liability for and cannot ensure the accuracy of the information presented. The collaborators are not making any representations with respect to the medications whatsoever, and any and all decisions, with respect to such medications, are at the sole risk of the individual consuming the medication. All decisions related to taking this medication should be made with the guidance and under the direction of a qualified healthcare professional.

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