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Etoposide

pronounced as (e toe poe' side)

IMPORTANT WARNING:

Etoposide can cause a severe decrease in the number of blood cells in your bone marrow. Your doctor will order laboratory tests regularly before and during your treatment. A decrease in the number of blood cells in your body may cause certain symptoms and may increase the risk that you will develop a serious infection or bleeding. If you experience any of the following symptoms, call your doctor immediately: fever, sore throat, ongoing cough and congestion, or other signs of infection; unusual bleeding or bruising; bloody or black, tarry stools; bloody vomit; or vomiting blood or brown material that resembles coffee grounds.

Why is this medication prescribed?

Etoposide is used in combination with other medications to treat a certain type of lung cancer (small cell lung cancer; SCLC). Etoposide is in a class of medications known as podophyllotoxin derivatives. It works by slowing or stopping the growth of cancer cells in your body.

How should this medicine be used?

Etoposide comes as a capsule to take by mouth. It is usually taken once a day for 4 or 5 days in a row. This cycle may be repeated once every 3 to 4 weeks, depending on your response to the medication. The length of treatment depends on the types of drugs you are taking, how well your body responds to them, and the type of cancer you have. Take etoposide at around the same time(s) every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take etoposide exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.

Other uses for this medicine

Etoposide is also sometimes used to treat certain types of ovarian cancer (cancer that begins in the female reproductive organs where eggs are formed). Talk to your doctor about the risks of using this medication for your condition.

This medication may be prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking etoposide,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to etoposide, any other medications, or any of the ingredients in etoposide capsules. Ask your pharmacist for a list of the ingredients.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what other prescription and nonprescription medications, vitamins, nutritional supplements, and herbal products you are taking or plan to take. Be sure to mention any of the following: cisplatin (Platinol), cyclosporine (Gengraf, Neoral, Sandimmune). Your doctor may need to change the doses of your medications or monitor you carefully for side effects. Many other medications may also interact with etoposide, so be sure to tell your doctor about all the medications you are taking, even those that do not appear on this list.
- tell your doctor if you have or have ever had kidney disease.
- tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You should not become pregnant or breast-feed while you are taking etoposide. If you become pregnant while taking etoposide, call your doctor. Etoposide may harm the fetus.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, continue your normal diet.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Etoposide may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- nausea
- vomiting
- sores in the mouth and throat
- stomach pain
- diarrhea
- constipation
- loss of appetite or weight
- unusual tiredness or weakness
- pale skin
- fainting
- dizziness
- hair loss

- pain, burning, or tingling in the hands or feet
- eye pain
- vision problems

Some side effects can be serious. If you experience any of these symptoms or those listed in the IMPORTANT WARNING section, stop taking etoposide and call your doctor immediately or get emergency medical treatment:

- rash
- hives
- itching
- difficulty breathing or swallowing
- fast, irregular, or pounding heartbeat
- seizures
- yellowing of the skin or eyes

Etoposide may increase the risk that you will develop other cancers. Talk to your doctor about the risks of taking this medication.

Etoposide may cause other side effects. Call your doctor if you have any unusual problems while taking this medication.

If you experience a serious side effect, you or your doctor may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online (<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch> [<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch>]) or by phone (1-800-332-1088).

What should I know about storage and disposal of this medication?

Keep this medication in the container it came in, in the refrigerator, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Do not freeze.

It is important to keep all medication out of sight and reach of children as many containers (such as weekly pill minders and those for eye drops, creams, patches, and inhalers) are not child-resistant and young children can open them easily. To protect young children from poisoning, always lock safety caps and immediately place the medication in a safe location – one that is up and away and out of their sight and reach. <http://www.upandaway.org> [<http://www.upandaway.org>]

Unneeded medications should be disposed of in special ways to ensure that pets, children, and other people cannot consume them. However, you should not flush this medication down the toilet. Instead, the best way to dispose of your medication is through a medicine take-back program. Talk to your pharmacist or contact your local garbage/recycling department to learn about take-back programs in your community. See the FDA's Safe Disposal of Medicines website (<http://goo.gl/c4Rm4p> [<http://goo.gl/c4Rm4p>]) for more information if you do not have access to a take-back program.

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call the poison control helpline at 1-800-222-1222. Information is also available online at <https://www.poisonhelp.org/help> [<https://www.poisonhelp.org/help>]. If the victim has collapsed, had a seizure, has trouble breathing, or can't be awakened, immediately call emergency services at 911.

What other information should I know?

Keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory. Your doctor will order certain tests to check your body's response to etoposide.

Do not let anyone else take your medication. Ask your pharmacist any questions you have about refilling your prescription.

It is important for you to keep a written list of all of the prescription and nonprescription (over-the-counter) medicines you are taking, as well as any products such as vitamins, minerals, or other dietary supplements. You should bring this list with you each time you visit a doctor or if you are admitted to a hospital. It is also important information to carry with you in case of emergencies.

Brand names

- Vepesid [¶]

Other names

- VP-16

[¶] - This branded product is no longer on the market. Generic alternatives may be available.

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