

# Hydroxyurea

Hydrea®

Chemotherapy capsules



## Understanding your treatment

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is a treatment against cancer that uses drugs to kill cancer cells. Chemotherapy can be used alone or in combination with other treatments such as radiotherapy.

How can chemotherapy help you?

Depending on your type of cancer and the stage of the disease, chemotherapy can be used to :

- **Destroy** cancer cells
- **Stop** the cancer from spreading
- **Slow** the growth of cancer cells

How will you feel while on chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is used to kill abnormal cells in your body. It can also damage healthy cells that divide quickly. Side effects occur when healthy cells are damaged.

Not everyone has side effects and each person's experience may differ. Side effects and their severity are not representative of the treatment's effect or lack thereof.

This document presents the most frequent side effects that your treatment causes.

Medication

**Hydroxyurea**

Capsules to take by mouth

Administration

To be taken once a day

With or without food

**On a continuous basis**



A **blood test** will be done throughout your treatment. Depending on the results and side effects of the previous treatment, the dose of the medication might be adjusted or the treatment might be delayed.

## How to take your medication?

- Take your hydroxyurea capsules as prescribed, once a day at the same time every day. You may take your medication before or during your meal with a large glass of water or juice. If you have difficulty tolerating it, for example, if it causes a stomach ache, take it while you eat.
- Capsules must be taken whole. Do not open the capsules.
- If you forget a dose, you may take it as soon as you remember but do not double your next dose. Try, however, to take your pills at the same time every day and in the same way (either with or without food).

## Storing and handling your medicines



- Wash your hands immediately after handling your medication.
- Keep your medication at room temperature, out of the reach of children and pets as well as protected from light, heat or moisture. Do not keep medicines in the bathroom.
- Don't throw away unused medication at home. Bring it back to your pharmacy to be destroyed safely. You may dispose of the empty containers in your home garbage can.
- Pour the medication from the container into the cap to avoid contact with other surfaces. If it inadvertently comes in contact with the surrounding surface, wash and rub the surface with water and soap.
- Caregivers should wear disposable gloves if they prepare medication for you. You can find disposable gloves at your local community pharmacy.
- Keep your medications in their original container and do not mix them with other drugs. The container should never be reused to put other objects or food.

## How can this treatment affect your daily life?

### Fatigue and appetite



- You may experience **fatigue** during your treatments. This is usually temporary and may be related to different reasons (medication, stress, the disease). Maintain a good level of activity but rest when you feel the need to.
- Your **appetite may diminish**. Eat more often, in smaller quantities.
- Your **sense of taste may be altered**. Enhance foods with *fines herbes* or lemon juice. Eating fruits and unsweetened candies, chewing non-sugared gums, etc., may mask the metallic taste.
- **Alcohol** in small quantities is allowed and will not affect the efficacy of the treatment.



## Sex life and birth control



- You can have an **active sexual** life during your treatments. However, a decrease in your sexual drive may occur during this period. This may also be influenced by different factors (fatigue, stress, etc.).
- It's safe to kiss, to touch, to hold hands, to sleep in the same bed and to cuddle.
- For **male patients**, the production of spermatozoids may be reduced or completely absent during treatments. This reduction of fertility may be permanent, may get better or return to normal after the treatments have stopped. This reduction of **fertility** does not prevent erection or sexual activity and a pregnancy remains possible.
- The treatment may affect the sperm and it may be harmful to the embryo.
  - If you have sex with a woman of child-bearing age, a birth control method is strongly recommended during treatments and up to 1 year after the end of treatment.
  - Notify your doctor immediately if you had unprotected sex and your partner is pregnant.
- In **pre-menopausal female patients** chemotherapy may cause the **menstrual cycle** to be irregular or stop completely during treatment. The menstrual cycle may restart or return to normal after the end of treatment. The menstrual cycle may also stop permanently. However, a pregnancy remains possible and chemotherapy administered during pregnancy may harm the embryo.
  - A **birth control** method is strongly recommended during treatments and up to 6 months after the end of treatment.
  - Breast-feeding is not recommended during treatment.

## Tips and precautions



- **Sit down to urinate and fold down the toilet lid**  
Women as well as men should sit down to urinate and fold down the toilet lid before flushing in order to avoid splashing. Flush twice to make sure everything has been flushed away. Follow these precautions during your treatment (or according to instructions from your cancer center).
- **Bodily fluids**  
During the treatment period, it's possible that a certain quantity of the medication is found in some bodily fluids or secretions that you produce, such as urine, stools, vomit, sperm and vaginal discharge. In order to protect the environment and those living with you, follow the instructions given by your cancer center about the right way to handle and dispose of the bodily fluids.
- **Over the counter medicines, natural health products and vaccines**  
Consult your healthcare team:
  - if you intend to take any other medication (with or without a prescription) or natural health products.
  - if you need to receive a vaccine.This could decrease your treatment's efficacy or increase its side effects.



- **Always have on hand the complete list of your medication**  
Be sure to always have on hand the complete list of your medication, dietary supplements, vitamins and other natural health products. Give it to you doctor and your pharmacist. It is important to make them aware of any change.
- **Drink plenty of fluids**  
It is very important to drink plenty of fluids during your treatment, especially during the first few cycles to protect your kidneys.



# What are the side effects of your treatment?

This fact sheet aims to let you know the side effects most commonly seen following the administration of your treatment. Please note that when you take any medication, there is a possibility that it causes rare side effects and it is difficult to predict which patients will be affected.

## ADVERSE EFFECTS

## MANAGEMENT

### Decrease in white blood cells

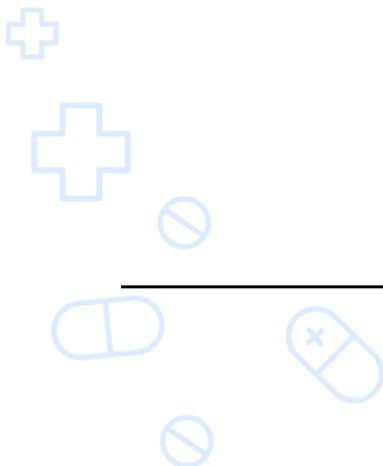
A decrease in **white blood cells** will occur during your treatment. You may be at higher risk of infections during this period.

- Wash your hands often.
- During this period, avoid coming in contact with people who have contagious diseases.
- Contact a member of your healthcare team quickly if you notice any signs of infection (chills, cough, sore throat, pain while you urinate, etc.).
- In case of fever, do not take acetaminophen (Ex. Tylenol<sup>®</sup>, Atasol<sup>®</sup>) and anti-inflammatory medication (Ex: Motrin<sup>®</sup>, Advil<sup>®</sup>, Aleve<sup>®</sup>).
- ❌ **Stop your treatment and go to the Emergency Room if:**
  - you have a fever of 38,3 °C (101°F) or above
  - or
  - you have a fever of 38 °C (100,4 °F) twice an hour apart.

### Ulcers in the mouth

Ulcers in the mouth may appear during your treatment. These ulcers can also appear in the throat.

- Gently and regularly brush your teeth after each meal and at bedtime.
- To prevent this effect, rinse your mouth with a solution of water and salt with or without baking soda or mouthwash without alcohol found in stores. Gargle 4 times a day – after every meal and at bedtime. Do not drink or eat for one hour after you gargle.
- ✅ **Continue your treatment if:** you have mild discomfort (ulcer, sensitivity, redness, irritation) that does not prevent you from eating. Continue your mouthwash.
- ⚠️ **Continue your treatment and call your healthcare team as soon as possible if:** you have moderate discomfort (redness and painful lesions) that prevents you from eating, but not completely. Continue your mouthwash.
- ❌ **Stop your treatment and call your healthcare team as quickly as possible or go to the Emergency Room if:** you have severe discomfort and pain that is bothersome enough that it prevents you almost completely from eating.



## ADVERSE EFFECTS

## MANAGEMENT

### Diarrhea

You may sometimes experience diarrhea, which may start after the start of treatment.

- Drink lots of liquids (8 to 10 glasses a day) unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- Eat and drink often but in small quantities.
- ✔ **Continue your treatment if:** you have light diarrhea (2 to 3 additional loose stools per day compared to usual before starting your treatment). Start loperamide (Imodium®) by taking 2 tablets first followed by one tablet after each loose stool for a maximum of 8 tablets per 24 hours period. Contact a member of your healthcare team if the diarrhea does not improve after taking loperamide for 24 hours.
- ⚠ **Continue your treatment and call your healthcare team as soon as possible if:** you experience more than 4 to 6 additional loose stools per day compared to usual before starting your treatment. Start loperamide (Imodium®) by taking 2 tablets first followed by one tablet after each loose stool for a maximum of 8 tablets per 24 hours period.
- ❌ **Stop your treatment and call your healthcare team as quickly as possible or go to the Emergency Room if:** you have 7 or more additional loose stools per day compared to usual before starting your treatment, if you are not able to hold it in (incontinence) or if you have diarrhea with a fever.

### Constipation

You may experience constipation.

- Exercise if possible.
- Drink lots of liquids (at least 8 glasses a day) (unless otherwise instructed by your doctor).
- Eat foods that are rich in fiber (cereals, fruits and vegetables).
- Communicate with a member of your healthcare team who, if necessary, will recommend appropriate laxatives.

### Nausea

Rarely, slight nausea may occur during your treatment.

- You may be prescribed medication to prevent nausea if needed.
- Contact a member of your healthcare team if you have nausea that bothers you.

### Hair loss

Depending on the individual, **thinning of the hair** may occur. However, don't worry; your hair will grow back after treatments have ended.

- Use gentle shampoo.
- In order to slow hair loss, avoid brushing hair vigorously.
- Avoid hair spray, dyes and perms.

PHARMACIST : \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE : \_\_\_\_\_

FROM \_\_\_\_ H \_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_ H \_\_\_\_ (MONDAY TO FRIDAY)

This fact sheet has been prepared by a sub-committee of the Comité national de l'évolution de la pratique des soins pharmaceutiques of the Programme québécois de cancérologie of the Ministry of Health and Social Services in consultation with the Comité de l'évolution de la pratique en oncologie of the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux.

DEVELOPED **NOVEMBER 2019**



# Treatment Diary | Hydroxyurea 30 days

CYCLE START DATE :

## LEGEND

-  Continue your treatment.
-  Continue your treatment and contact your healthcare team as soon as possible.
-  Stop your treatment and contact your healthcare team without delay or go to the Emergency Room.

Refer to the information sheet for more details.

## TREATMENT

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
(Record the dose taken)	mg																														

Date (dd-mm)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
<b>DECREASE IN WHITE BLOOD CELLS</b>																														
 You have a fever of 38,3°C (101°F) or above or you have a fever of 38°C (100,4°F) twice an hour apart with or without symptoms of infection.																														
<b>ULCERS IN THE MOUTH</b>																														
 Mild discomfort (ulcer, sensitivity, redness, irritation) that does not prevent you from eating.																														
 Moderate discomfort (redness and painful lesions) that prevents you from eating, but not completely.																														
 Severe discomfort and pain that is bothersome enough that it prevents you almost completely from eating.																														

<b>DIARRHEA</b>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
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