Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Docetaxel

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it’s used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: Canada

Taxotere [DSC]

Warning

- Very bad and sometimes deadly allergic reactions have happened with this drug. Do not take this drug if you have ever had an allergic reaction to this drug or to other drugs that have polysorbate 80 in them.
- The risk of death that may rarely happen with this drug is raised in people with liver problems and in people who get high doses of this drug. The risk is also raised in people with a certain type of lung cancer who have been treated with a platinum-based chemo drug in the past. This drug must not be given to some people with high bilirubin levels, liver problems, or raised liver enzymes. If you have any of these health problems or any questions, talk with your doctor.
- This drug may cause you to swell or keep fluid in your body. Tell your doctor if you have swelling, weight gain, or trouble breathing.
- Low blood cell counts have happened with this drug. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. Sometimes, these have been deadly. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- If you have a low white blood cell count, talk with your doctor. This drug must not be used in certain people with low white blood cell counts.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Atazanavir, clarithromycin, indinavir, itraconazole, ketoconazole, nefazodone, nelfinavir, ritonavir, saquinavir, telithromycin, or voriconazole.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug and for 1 week after your last dose.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.
- This drug has alcohol in it. This may cause you to feel drunk during and after treatment. Tell your doctor if you have confusion, feel drunk, stumble, or feel very sleepy during treatment or within 1 to 2 hours after treatment.
- Talk with your doctor before you use alcohol, marijuana or other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often.

Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.

- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- Rarely, other cancers have happened in people taking this drug with some other cancer treatments. This includes certain blood cancers and kidney cancer. This may happen months to years after treatment. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Hair loss is common with this drug. Most of the time, normal hair growth has come back. Sometimes, hair growth has not gone back to normal. Talk with the doctor.
- Some people have felt very tired or weak with this drug. This may last a few days up to several weeks. Call the doctor if these signs are very bad, cause problems with daily living, or do not go away.
- This drug can cause a severe bowel problem (neutropenic enterocolitis). This problem can be deadly, sometimes as early as the first day signs happen. Call your doctor right away if you have stomach pain with or without a fever, tender stomach, or diarrhea.
- This drug may cause a certain eye problem called cystoid macular edema (CME). You may need to have eye exams while using this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have a change in eyesight like blurred eyesight or loss of eyesight.
- Patients with cancer who take this drug may be at a greater risk of getting a severe health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). This may lead to death. Call your doctor right away if you have a fast or abnormal heartbeat; any passing out; trouble passing urine; muscle weakness or cramps; upset stomach, throwing up, diarrhea, or not able to eat; or feel sluggish.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect being able to father a child. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause harm to an unborn baby. A pregnancy test will be done before you start this drug to show that you are NOT pregnant.

- If you or your sex partner may become pregnant, you must use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask your doctor how long to use birth control. If you or your sex partner gets pregnant, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up or coughing up blood; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; abnormal vaginal bleeding; bruises without a cause or that get bigger; or bleeding you cannot stop.
- Signs of lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Signs of a very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.

- Muscle weakness.
- Any skin reaction.
- This drug may cause tissue damage if the drug leaks from the vein. Tell your nurse if you have any redness, burning, pain, swelling, blisters, skin sores, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your body.
- Liver problems have rarely happened with this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Mouth sores.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Change in nails.
- Change in taste.
- Muscle or joint pain.
- Flushing.
- Eye redness.
- More tears.
- Weight loss.
- Period (menstrual) changes.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.
- A steroid drug like dexamethasone will be given before this drug to lower side effects. Talk with the doctor. Tell the doctor if the steroid drug is not used as your doctor has told you.
- You will need to be sure that you are not dehydrated before getting this drug. Check with your doctor to see if you need to drink extra fluids before getting this drug.
- If you have constipation, diarrhea, throwing up, or upset stomach, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider’s examination and assessment of a patient’s specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of

medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2023-02-23

Copyright

© 2024 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Docetaxel - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center