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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Hydroxyurea

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: US

Droxia; Hydrea; Siklos

## Brand Names: Canada

APO-Hydroxyurea; Hydrea; MYLAN-Hydroxyurea

## Warning

- This drug may lower the ability of the bone marrow to make blood cells that the body needs. This can lead to needing a blood transfusion and very bad and sometimes deadly bleeding problems or infections. Tell the doctor right away if your child has signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any bruising or bleeding; or if your child feels very tired or weak.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may raise the chance of getting cancer. A type of cancer called leukemia and skin cancer have happened in people taking this drug for a long time. Your child will need to have regular check-ups. The doctor will tell you how often your child needs to have these. Talk with the doctor.
- Have your child avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and dress your child in clothing and eyewear that protects him/her from the sun.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat sickle cell anemia.

- It is used to treat a type of leukemia.
- It is used to treat cancer of the head and neck.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## **What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?**

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Anemia (other than sickle cell anemia); bone marrow problems like low platelet count, low red blood cell count, or low white blood cell count; or wounds on the legs (leg ulcers).
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Didanosine or stavudine.

### **If your child is breast-feeding a baby:**

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug.

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

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

## **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Your child may bleed more easily. Make sure your child is careful and avoids injury. Be sure your child has a soft toothbrush.

- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Talk with the doctor before your child gets any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of very bad infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Severe pancreas, liver, and nerve problems have happened when this drug was taken with certain drugs used to treat HIV. Sometimes, this has been deadly. If you have questions. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child has had or will be having radiation treatment, talk with the doctor. Worse side effects from radiation treatment have happened with this drug.
- Allergic reactions have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these have been very bad and people have had to go to the hospital. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect sperm in males. This may affect being able to father a child later in life. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will need to be done before starting this drug to make sure she is not pregnant.

**If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- Have your child use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask the doctor how long your child must use birth control. If your child becomes pregnant, call the doctor right away.
- Males with a partner who may get pregnant must use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask your child's doctor how long to use birth control. If your child's partner gets pregnant, call the doctor right away.

**What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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.
- Change in color or size of a mole.
- A skin lump or growth.
- Change in skin or finger nails.
- Skin ulcers and dead body tissue (gangrene) has happened with this drug. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has skin ulcers or any other skin changes.
- Some people have had lung problems with this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has signs of lung problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough that is new or worse, or fever.

## **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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Headache.
- Upset stomach.
- Diarrhea or constipation.
- Not hungry.
- Hair loss.
- Mouth sores.
- Weight gain.

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

about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## **How is this drug best given?**

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### **All products:**

- Give this drug at the same time of day.
- Give this drug with or without food.
- Give this drug with a full glass of water.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.
- You will need to take special care when handling this drug. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to see how to handle this drug.
- Wear gloves when touching this drug.

### **Capsules:**

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, open, or crush.
- If the capsule is opened or broken, do not touch the contents. If the contents are touched or they get in the eyes, wash hands or eyes right away.

### **Tablets:**

- The tablets may be split based on the dose that is needed. If splitting the tablets, only split on the score line.
- If your child cannot swallow tablets, they can be dissolved in a small amount of water in a teaspoon. After mixing, give the dose right away. Do not store for future use.
- If a tablet is crushed, do not touch it. If a crushed tablet is touched or gets it in the eyes, wash hands or eyes right away.

## What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

### All products:

- Store at room temperature.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- 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.

### Capsules:

- You must handle and throw away this drug the right way. If powder from the capsule is spilled, wipe it up with a damp paper towel. Throw away the towel and the empty capsules in a closed holder, such as a plastic bag. Wash your hands fully.

### Tablets:

- If you have split the tablets, store the smaller parts in the bottle. Use the smaller parts within 3 months.
- You must handle and throw away this drug the right way. If powder from a broken tablet is spilled, wipe it up with a damp paper towel. Throw away the towel in a closed holder, such as a plastic bag. Wash your hands fully.

## General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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 information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

## **Last Reviewed Date**

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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