Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Bexarotene (Systemic

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ 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

Targretin

Warning

- Do not take if you are pregnant. Use during pregnancy may cause birth defects. If you get pregnant while taking this drug or plan on getting pregnant, call your doctor right away.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a type of lymphoma that affects the skin.

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 gemfibrozil.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

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.
- It may take several months to see full effect.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with

infections, colds, or flu.

- If you take insulin or other drugs to treat high blood sugar (diabetes), watch your blood sugar closely. Low blood sugar can happen and diabetes drugs may need to be changed.
- This drug may cause high cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Talk with the doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you take products that have vitamin A in them.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- You may get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- If the capsule is opened or broken, do not touch the contents. If you do touch the contents or get it in your eyes, wash the area right away and call your doctor.
- This drug may make cataracts worse or may raise the chance of new cataracts. Talk with the doctor.

- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Use some other kind of birth control also like a condom when taking this drug.
- A pregnancy test will be done to show that you are NOT pregnant before starting this drug and while taking it.
- Use 2 kinds of birth control 1 month before starting this drug, during treatment, and for at least 1 month after the last dose.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 1 month after your last dose, call your doctor right away.
- If your sex partner is pregnant, may be pregnant, or can get pregnant, always use a condom during sex. Use a condom during treatment and for at least 1 month after treatment ends.
- If your sex partner gets pregnant while you take this drug or within 1 month after your last dose, 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 low thyroid levels like constipation; not able to handle cold; memory problems; mood changes; or a burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Change in eyesight.
- Swelling in the arms or legs.
- Rarely, a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) has happened with this drug. This has included 1 death. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of pancreatitis like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- 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:

- Headache.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Decreased appetite.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Stomach pain or diarrhea.
- Hair loss.
- Dry skin.
- Back pain.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Flu-like signs.

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.

- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- Take with a meal.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, open, or crush.
- If you are able to get pregnant and have menstrual periods, start taking this drug on the second or third day of a normal menstrual period.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, with food.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Protect from heat and light.
- 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.

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.
- 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

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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.

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