PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Capecitabine

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

Xeloda [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

ACH-Capecitabine; Mint-Capecitabine; SANDOZ Capecitabine; TARO-Capecitabine

Warning

- The risk of severe and sometimes deadly side effects is raised in people with dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency. These side effects may include mouth sores, diarrhea, low white blood cell counts, heart problems, or nervous system problems. You will need a test before starting this drug to check for changes in a certain gene (DPYD), unless your doctor tells you otherwise. If you have changes in the DPYD gene, talk with your doctor. This drug may not be right for you.
- A higher risk of bleeding and bleeding problems have happened when this drug was taken with certain types of blood thinners like warfarin. At times, this has been deadly. Bleeding problems happened within several days to several months after this drug was started. Rarely, this also happened within 1 month after this drug was stopped. If you are taking a blood thinner, talk with your doctor. You may need to have your blood work checked more often.

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 have a dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency or kidney disease.
- If you have any of these health problems: Low white blood cell count, low platelet count, or low red blood cell count.
- If you are taking allopurinol.
- 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.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids every day unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.
- If you throw up 2 or more times in a day, call your doctor right away. Do not take more of this drug until you talk to your doctor.
- Dehydration has happened. This may cause severe kidney problems, which can be deadly. The chance may be higher if you have kidney problems or take drugs that can cause kidney problems. Loss of appetite, upset stomach, throwing up, diarrhea, stomach cramps, and feeling weak may also raise the risk of dehydration. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- 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.

- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- Heart problems like heart attack, heart failure, and a heartbeat that does not feel normal have happened with this drug. Sudden deaths have also happened. These effects may be more common in people who have ever had heart disease before. Talk with your doctor.
- A problem called hand and foot syndrome can happen. If it is bad or lasts for a long time, this can lead to loss of fingerprints. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect fertility. Fertility problems may lead to not being able to get pregnant or father a child. If you plan to get pregnant or father a child, talk with your doctor before taking this drug.
- 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 may become pregnant, use birth control while taking this drug and for 6 months after your last dose. If you get pregnant, call your doctor right away.

- If your sex partner may become pregnant, use birth control while taking this drug and for 3 months after your last dose. If your partner gets pregnant, call the 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 fluid and electrolyte problems like mood changes, confusion, muscle pain or weakness, fast or abnormal heartbeat, severe dizziness or passing out, increased thirst, seizures, feeling very tired or weak, decreased appetite, unable to pass urine or change in the amount of urine produced, dry mouth, dry eyes, or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of heart problems like chest pain; fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat; or shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Swelling.
- Dark urine or yellow skin or eyes.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Redness or irritation of the palms of hands or soles of feet.
- Swollen gland.
- Mood changes.
- Swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm.

- Trouble walking.
- Change in balance.
- Not able to focus.
- Not thinking clearly.
- Memory problems or loss.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, 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:

- Hair loss.
- Headache.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Change in nails.
- Feeling tired or weak.

- Eye irritation.
- Dry skin.
- Back, bone, joint, or muscle pain.
- Change in taste.
- Weight loss.
- Flushing.
- Stomach pain.
- Constipation.
- Diarrhea, throwing up, upset stomach, and decreased appetite are common. Talk with your doctor about ways to lower these side effects. Call your doctor right away if these bother you, do not get better, or become severe. You will need to take care not to get dehydrated.

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 within 30 minutes after a meal.
- Swallow whole with a full glass of water.
- Do not chew, cut, or crush this drug. Talk with your doctor if you cannot swallow the tablet.
- Take your doses at the same time each day. Take about 12 hours apart.
- If you throw up after taking a dose, do not repeat the dose. Take your next dose at your normal time.
- You will need to take special care when handling this drug. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to see how to handle this drug.
- If the tablets must be cut or crushed, do not do it by yourself. A healthcare provider will need to cut or crush the tablets if needed.
- 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?

- 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.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- 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 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

2026-02-16

Copyright

© 2026 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.

Capecitabine - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center