Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Mitotane

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

Lysodren

Brand Names: Canada

Lysodren

Warning

- This drug lowers how much natural steroid your adrenal gland makes. If you have fever, infection, severe injury, or surgery, tell your doctor right away. You may need to stop this drug for a period of time or take extra doses of steroid. Your body's normal response to these stresses may be affected. This can cause severe side effects or even death.
- Tell your doctor right away if you have signs of adrenal gland problems like severe weakness, confusion, lower back or leg pain, stomach pain, nausea, throwing up, diarrhea, decreased appetite, weight loss, dizziness or passing out, feeling very tired or sleepy, feeling depressed or irritable, hair loss, areas of darkened skin, or salt craving. Tell your doctor right away if you have signs of low blood sugar like headache, feeling weak, shaking, a fast heartbeat, hunger, or sweating.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer of the adrenal gland.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

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 any of the following conditions: Kidney or liver disease.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Spironolactone or warfarin.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug. You will also need to avoid breast-feeding after you stop this drug until there is no more of this drug in your body. Talk with your doctor to see how long you need to avoid breast-feeding after you stop this drug.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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.
- If you will be having surgery or dental work, talk with your doctor.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have

been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.

- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- This drug may cause high cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are overweight, you have recently lost weight, or you plan to lose weight, talk with your doctor. The level of this drug in your body may need closer watching.
- This drug may lower the ability of the bone marrow to make blood cells that the body needs. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- If the patient is a child or teenager, talk with the doctor about the use of this drug. This drug may affect growth in children and teens. It may also cause other serious side effects.
- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Talk with your doctor about what type of birth control to use and how long to use it.
- This drug may cause harm to an unborn baby or loss of an unborn baby. A pregnancy test will be done before you start this drug to show that you are NOT pregnant.
- Use a non-hormone type of birth control like condoms or diaphragms and spermicide while you take this drug. You will also need to use it after you stop this drug until there is no more of this drug in your body. Talk with your doctor to see how long you need to use birth control after you stop this drug.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within several months after the 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 a weak adrenal gland like a severe upset stomach or throwing up, severe dizziness or passing out, muscle weakness, feeling very tired, mood changes, decreased appetite, or weight loss.
- 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.
- 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.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- 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.
- Abnormal heartbeat.
- Pale skin.
- Change in eyesight.

- Feeling confused.
- Depression.
- Change in balance.
- Change in speech.
- Trouble thinking or focusing.
- Enlarged breasts.
- Ovarian cysts have happened with this drug in people who have not been through menopause. Sometimes, severe effects like twisting of the ovaries (ovarian torsion) or ruptured cysts have happened. Call your doctor right away if you have vaginal bleeding that is not normal or pelvic pain.

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:

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.
- Flushing.
- Heartburn.
- Change in taste.
- Diarrhea, throwing up, upset stomach, and decreased appetite are common with this drug. If these happen, talk with your doctor about ways to lower these side effects. Call your doctor right away if any of these effects bother you, do not get better, or are severe.

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 with food. It is best to take this drug with a high-fat meal or snack. Ask your doctor what types of foods are best to eat with this drug.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- Do not take this drug if it is broken, cracked, or looks damaged.
- 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.
- Caregivers need to wear gloves when giving this drug.
- 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 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.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, 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

2025-05-12

Copyright

© 2025 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.

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