Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Porfimer

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

Photofrin

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.
- It is used to treat Barrett's esophagus.

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 these health problems: Fistula of the esophagus, porphyria, a tumor in a blood vessel, ulcer in the esophagus, or swollen veins in the stomach or esophagus.
- If you are getting radiation.
- If you are taking any drugs that may make your skin more sensitive to light. There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug and for 5 months after you stop taking it.

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.
- If you have upset stomach, throwing up, diarrhea, or decreased appetite, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- You may get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, bright indoor lights, and tanning beds for as long as you were told by your doctor. Wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun. Sunscreens will not protect you.
- It is important for your skin to be in normal indoor light after getting this drug instead of a dark room. You will need to test your skin before being in bright indoor light or sunlight. This lasts for at least 30 days after treatment. Some people may burn easily for up to 90 days. Follow what your doctor has told you to do in regard to indoor and outdoor light.
- Bright lights may bother you for some time after using this drug. Wear sunglasses for as long as you were told by your doctor.
- Blood clots have happened with this drug. Tell your doctor if you have ever had a blood clot. Talk with your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor if you will need to be still for long periods of time like long trips, bedrest after surgery, or illness. Not moving for long periods may raise your chance of blood clots.
- 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 5 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 5 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 a urinary tract infection (UTI) like blood in the urine, burning or pain when passing urine, feeling the need to pass urine often or right away, fever, lower stomach pain, or pelvic pain.
- Signs of dehydration like dry skin, mouth, or eyes; thirst; fast heartbeat; dizziness; fast breathing; or confusion.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Throat irritation.
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Trouble swallowing.

- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.
- Cough that does not go away.
- Vaginal itching or discharge.
- Feeling confused.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of a blood clot like chest pain or pressure; coughing up blood; shortness of breath; swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm; or trouble speaking or swallowing.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly stomach or bowel problems have happened with this drug. This includes stomach or bowel bleeding, holes or tears, and tissue death. Call your doctor right away if you have fever or chills; black, tarry, or bloody stools; stomach pain; stomach swelling/throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.

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 growth.
- Change in color of skin.
- Bumps, thick, dry, or wrinkled skin.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Weight loss.
- Cough.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Back pain.

- Anxiety.
- People using this drug may get skin reactions where this drug is used. These reactions may include blisters, burning, itching, redness, swelling, or a warm feeling. Call your doctor if you have skin reactions that are very bad, bother you, or do not go away.

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 into a vein for a period of time.
- This drug is used with light therapy.

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.

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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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