Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Tretinoin (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: Canada

JAMP-Tretinoin; Vesanoid

Warning

- The risk of severe and sometimes deadly birth defects is very high if you take this drug at any time while you are pregnant. Any unborn baby can be harmed. There is no good way to tell if an unborn baby has been harmed. The risk of losing an unborn baby is also raised and premature births have happened. Your doctor will talk about the risks before you start this drug. If you take this drug while you are pregnant, make sure that you know all the facts about the risks to the unborn baby.
- If you are able to get pregnant, you must use 2 kinds of birth control for 1 month before you start this drug, while you take it, and for 1 month after your last dose. A pregnancy test will be done to show that you are NOT pregnant before you start this drug and every month while you take it. 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 may get pregnant, you may need to use birth control while you take this drug and for 1 week after your last dose. Talk with your doctor to see if you need to use birth control while you are taking this drug.
- This drug may cause a high white blood cell count. Sometimes, this can

raise the chance of very bad and sometimes deadly health problems. You will be closely watched by your doctor.

- This drug may cause a severe and sometimes deadly health problem called differentiation syndrome (retinoic-acid-APL syndrome). Most of the time, this problem happens during the first month of taking this drug and sometimes after the first dose. Call your doctor right away if you have fever, shortness of breath or trouble breathing; swelling; weight gain; severe dizziness or passing out; 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; or signs of kidney problems like not able to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, or blood in the urine.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a type of leukemia.

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 any of these drugs: Demeclocycline, doxycycline, minocycline, tetracycline, a product that has vitamin A in it, a product that is like vitamin A, or St. John's wort.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Aminocaproic acid or tranexamic acid.
- 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.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- Treatment with this drug may lead to higher cholesterol and triglycerides. The effect of these changes on heart health is not known. Talk with the doctor.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Constipation, diarrhea, throwing up, and upset stomach 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 go away, or are severe.
- Blood clots have happened with this drug. Tell your doctor if you have ever had a blood clot. Talk with your doctor.
- 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.
- Raised pressure in the brain has happened with this drug. This can cause long lasting loss of eyesight and sometimes death. Call your doctor right away if you have a bad headache, dizziness, upset stomach or throwing up, or seizures. Call your doctor right away if you have weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, or change in eyesight.

- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.
- Do not use progestin-only birth control pills (minipills). They may not work well. Talk with your doctor.
- If you miss a period, have unprotected sex, or think that your birth control has not worked, 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 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 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 lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.
- Change in eyesight.

- Change in hearing.
- Hearing loss.
- Swelling of belly.
- A heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Depression or other mood changes.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Feeling confused.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Pale skin.

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.
- Flushing.
- Headache.
- Stomach pain.
- Bone, muscle, or side pain.
- Skin irritation.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Dry mouth, eyes, skin, or lips.
- Sweating a lot.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Anxiety.
- Trouble sleeping.

- Earache.
- Weight gain or loss.
- Decreased appetite.
- Shivering.
- Signs of a common cold.

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 with a meal.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, open, or dissolve.
- If you are not able to swallow this drug whole, talk with your doctor.
- If you throw up after taking this drug, do not repeat the dose.
- 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.
- If it is less than 10 hours until 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 protected from light. 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.

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.

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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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