PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Alteplase

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

Activase; Cathflo Activase

Brand Names: Canada

Activase RT-PA; Alteplase RT-PA; Cathflo

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to clear blood clots out of catheters.
- It is used to treat blood clots that have caused certain health problems like some types of heart attacks or strokes.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

For all uses of this drug:

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.

For all uses of this drug other than in a catheter:

- If your child has any of these health problems: Aneurysm, arteriovenous malformations, bleeding problems like bleeding in the brain, brain tumor, or high blood pressure.
- If your child has had any of these health problems: Stroke; injury to the head, brain, or spine; or surgery on the brain or spine.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

For all uses of this drug:

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.

For all uses of this drug other than in a catheter:

- Your child may bleed more easily. Make sure your child is careful and avoids injury. Be sure your child has a soft toothbrush. Rarely, some bleeding problems have been deadly.
- Use care to prevent your child from getting hurt and have your child avoid falls or crashes.

- 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 child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- People with certain heart problems who use this drug to treat a blood clot in the lung may have a raised chance of another blood clot. If you have questions about whether your child may have a raised chance of another blood clot, talk with the doctor.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

For all uses of this drug:

- 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. Rarely, some allergic reactions have been deadly.
- 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.
- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.
- Very bad headache.
- Severe stomach pain.

For use in a catheter:

- Redness, swelling, or pain at the catheter site.
- Swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm.

For all uses of this drug other than in a catheter:

- Rarely, a health problem called cholesterol embolism has happened with drugs like this one. This problem has also happened with some blood vessel procedures. Sometimes, this can be deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a change in color of the skin to bluish, black, or purple. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a change in how much urine is passed; severe headache or dizziness; passing out; chest pain or pressure; change in eyesight; muscle pain or dark urine; or severe stomach pain, back pain, upset stomach, or throwing up.

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 child's doctor or get medical help if your child has any side effects that bother your child 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 child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

For use in a catheter:

- It is given into the catheter.

For all uses of this drug other than in a catheter:

- It is given as a shot into a vein.
- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- This drug will be given on an as needed basis in a health care setting.

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

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- 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 child's 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.

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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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