PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Arsenic Trioxide

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
Trisenox

Brand Names: Canada
Trisenox [DSC]

Warning

- A health problem called differentiation syndrome has happened. This may cause organ problems and can be deadly if not treated. Call the doctor right away if your child has bone pain, cough, fever, shortness of breath or other breathing problems, sudden weight gain, swelling in the arms or legs, or swollen gland. Call the doctor right away if your child has signs of liver problems like dark urine or yellow skin or eyes; signs of kidney problems like unable to

pass urine, change in amount of urine passed, or blood in the urine; or signs of low blood pressure like dizziness or passing out.

- This drug may cause a very bad and sometimes deadly type of heartbeat that is not normal (long QT on ECG, torsades de pointes). The chance may be raised if your child takes amphotericin B or some types of water pills (diuretics), if your child has low potassium or magnesium levels, or if your child has heart failure. If your child has ever had a long QT on ECG or other abnormal heartbeat, talk with your child's doctor. This drug may not be right for your child. If you have questions, talk with your child's doctor.
- Talk with the doctor if your child is taking any drugs that can cause a certain type of heartbeat that is not normal (prolonged QT interval). There are many drugs that can do this. Ask the doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.
- Have your child's blood work checked and an ECG (to see how your child's heart beats) as you have been told by the doctor.
- Severe brain or nervous system problems, like Wernicke's encephalopathy, have happened with this drug. Talk with your child's doctor if your child

takes furosemide, drinks alcohol, has low thiamine levels, has poor nutrition, or if their body does not take in nutrients well. Call your child's doctor right away if your child feels confused or very sleepy. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a change in balance, change in eyesight, trouble thinking or walking, or seizures.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a type of leukemia.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes 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.
- If your child is taking any drugs that can cause electrolyte problems. There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your child's doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug and for 2 weeks after the last dose.

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?

- 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.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Your child may bleed more easily. Make sure your child is careful and avoids injury. Be sure your child has a soft toothbrush.
- This drug may add to the chance of getting some types of cancer. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child has an upset stomach or diarrhea, is

throwing up, or decreased appetite, talk with the doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.

- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with the doctor. This drug can raise blood sugar.
- Check your child's blood sugar as you have been told by the doctor.
- This drug may affect sperm. This may affect being able to father a child later in life. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will need to be done before starting this drug to make sure your child is not pregnant.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- If your child may become pregnant, have your child use birth control while taking this drug and for 6 months after the last dose. If your child gets pregnant, call the doctor right away.
- If your child's sex partner may become pregnant, have them use birth control while taking this drug and for 3 months after the last dose. If your child's partner gets pregnant, call the doctor right away.

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:

- 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 high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.

- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat; seizures; loss of appetite; or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Chest pain or pressure, a fast heartbeat, or an abnormal heartbeat.
- Swollen gland.
- Depression.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Shakiness.
- Fast breathing.
- Feeling agitated.
- Ringing in the ears, hearing loss, or any other changes in hearing.
- Swelling.
- 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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Headache.
- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Weight gain or loss.
- Dry mouth, skin, or eyes.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Back, bone, joint, muscle, or neck pain.
- Sweating a lot.
- Pain, redness, or swelling where the shot was given.
- Eye irritation.
- Anxiety.
- Pain in arms or legs.
- Flushing.
- Skin irritation.
- Ear pain.

- 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 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.

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

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Call your child's 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 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.

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,

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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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