PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Hydroxyurea

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

Droxia; Hydrea; Siklos; Xromi

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Hydroxyurea; Hydrea; MYLAN-Hydroxyurea; RIVA-Hydroxyurea

Warning

- This drug may lower the ability of the bone marrow to make blood cells that the body needs. This can lead to a blood transfusion. Severe and sometimes deadly bleeding problems or infections can also happen. Tell the doctor right away if your child has signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any bruising or bleeding; or if your child feels very tired or weak.
- If your child has bone marrow problems like low platelet count, low red blood cell count, or low white blood cell count, talk with the doctor. This drug may not be right for some people with these problems.
- Have your child's blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- This drug may raise the chance of getting cancer. A type of cancer called leukemia and skin cancer have happened in people taking this drug for a long time. Your child will need to have regular check-ups. The doctor will tell you how often your child needs to have these. Talk with the doctor.
- Have your child avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and dress your child in clothing and eyewear that protects from the sun.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat sickle cell anemia.
- It is used to treat a type of leukemia.
- It is used to treat cancer of the head and neck.
- 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?

- 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 has any of these health problems: Anemia (other than sickle cell anemia) or wounds on the legs (leg ulcers).
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Didanosine or stavudine.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug.

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 affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Some of these drugs may affect certain continuous glucose monitors (CGM).

False results of glucose tests may lead to low blood sugar. Talk with the doctor about the best way to monitor blood sugar.

- Talk with the doctor to see if your child needs to take folic acid while taking this drug.
- Talk with the doctor before your child gets any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of very bad infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Severe pancreas, liver, and nerve problems have happened when this drug was taken with certain drugs used to treat HIV. Sometimes, this has been deadly. If you have questions. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child has ever had or will be having radiation treatment, talk with the doctor. Worse side effects from radiation treatment have happened with this drug.
- Allergic reactions have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these have been very bad and people have had to go to the hospital. Talk with 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. Your child will also need to use birth control for 6 months after the last dose unless you have been told otherwise. Be sure you know how long your child needs to use birth control. 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. They will also need to use birth control for 1

year after the last dose unless you have been told otherwise. Be sure you know how long they need to use birth control. 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 hemolytic anemia like dark lips or urine, dizziness or passing out, feeling confused, feeling very tired or weak, pale skin, shortness of breath, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Change in color or size of a mole.
- A skin lump or growth.
- Change in skin or finger nails.
- Swelling in the arms or legs.
- Skin ulcers and dead body tissue (gangrene) has happened with this drug. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has skin ulcers or any other skin changes.
- Some people have had lung problems with this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has signs of lung problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough that is new or worse, or fever.

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:

Tablets and capsules:

- Headache.
- Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, or decreased appetite.
- Hair loss.
- Mouth sores.
- Weight gain.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Dry skin.
- Back, joint, arm, or leg pain.

Oral solution:

- Diarrhea.

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.

All products:

- Give this drug at the same time of day.
- Give this drug with or without food.
- Give this drug with a full glass of water.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.
- You will need to take special care when handling this drug. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to see how to handle this drug.
- Wear gloves when touching this drug or bottles with this drug in them. Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling.

Capsules:

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, open, or crush.
- If the capsule is opened or broken, do not touch the contents. If the contents are touched or they get in the eyes, wash hands or eyes right away.

Tablets:

- The tablets may be split based on the dose that is needed. If splitting the tablets, only split on the score line.
- If your child cannot swallow tablets, they can be dissolved in a small amount of water in a teaspoon. After mixing, give the dose right away. Do not store for future use.
- If a tablet is crushed, do not touch it. If a crushed tablet is touched or gets it in the eyes, wash hands or eyes right away.

Oral solution:

- Do not shake.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Two measuring devices come with this drug. Be sure you know the right one to use for your child's dose. If there is none,

ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

- Do not get this drug on the skin or in the eyes. If this drug gets on the skin, wash with soap and water right away. If this drug gets in the eyes, rinse eyes right away with water for at least 15 minutes.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

Tablets and capsules:

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Oral solution:

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it on the same day your child missed the dose.
- If you do not think about the missed dose until the next day, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

Capsules:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- You must handle and throw away this drug the right way. If powder from the capsule is spilled, wipe it up with a damp paper towel. Throw away the towel and the empty capsules in a closed holder, such as a plastic bag. Wash your hands fully.

Tablets:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- If you have split the tablets, store the smaller parts in the bottle. Use the

smaller parts within 3 months.

- You must handle and throw away this drug the right way. If powder from a broken tablet is spilled, wipe it up with a damp paper towel. Throw away the towel in a closed holder, such as a plastic bag. Wash your hands fully.

Oral solution:

- Store in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- This drug may be stored at room temperature for up to 72 hours.
- After opening, throw away any part not used after 12 weeks.

All products:

- Keep lid tightly closed.
- 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 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.
- 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, 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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