MSK Kids

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Mitoxantrone

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.

## Warning

- This drug may cause severe heart problems like heart failure. This can happen during treatment or years after the last dose. Sometimes, these problems will not go away or may be deadly. The chance may be higher if your child has had heart problems or chest area radiation, or is using other drugs that may cause heart problems. The chance may also be higher if your child has ever had this drug or a drug like this one. Ask the doctor if you are not sure if any of your child's drugs may cause heart problems. The chance of heart problems depends on the dose of this drug and your child's health problem. The chance of heart problems later in life is also higher. Heart problems may happen even without any risk factors. Call the doctor right away if your child has a cough; chest pain; fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat, swelling in the arms or legs, shortness of breath, or sudden weight gain; or feeling very tired or weak.
- Have your child's blood work and heart function checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- If your child has heart disease, talk with the doctor.
- If your child has a low white blood cell count, talk with your child's doctor. This drug must not be used in certain people with low white blood cell counts.
- This drug may raise the chance of getting a type of cancer called acute myeloid leukemia (AML). If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause tissue damage if the drug leaks from the vein. Tell your child's nurse if your child has any redness, burning, pain, swelling, blisters, skin sores, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your child's body.
- This drug must not be given into the spine.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a type of leukemia.
- If your child has been given this drug for some other reason, talk with the doctor about the benefits and risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about giving this drug to your child.

## 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 liver disease or raised liver enzymes.
- If your child has had chemo treatments before and still has blood problems from those treatments.

### 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.
- This drug may lower the ability of the bone marrow to make blood cells that

the body needs. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

- 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.
- If your child has had daunorubicin, doxorubicin, epirubicin, idarubicin, or mitoxantrone before, talk with your child's doctor.
- 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.
- If your child is allergic to sulfites, talk with your child's doctor. Some products have sulfites in them.
- 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 an unborn baby. Have your child use birth control to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug. If your child gets pregnant, call the doctor right away. Talk with the doctor about the benefits and risks of taking this drug during pregnancy.

## 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 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 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 kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Yellow skin or eyes.
- Bone pain.
- Blue or gray color of the skin, lips, nail beds, fingers, or toes.
- Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a swollen gland, night sweats, shortness of breath, or weight loss without trying.

## 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:

- Change in color of body fluids (urine) to blue or green for about 24 hours after getting this drug. This is normal and not a cause for concern.
- Blue coloring of the whites of the eyes for about 24 hours after getting this drug. This is normal and not a cause for concern.
- Hair thinning or loss.
- Constipation.
- Stomach pain.

- Headache.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Back pain.
- Signs of a common cold.
- Weight loss.
- Diarrhea, throwing up, upset stomach, and decreased appetite are common with this drug. If these happen, talk with your child's doctor about ways to lower these side effects. Call your child's doctor right away if any of these effects bother your child, do not get better, or are severe.

### If your child has menstrual periods:

- No menstrual period.
- Period (menstrual) changes.

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, 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

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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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