MSK Kids

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Ribavirin (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.

Warning

- Do not give this drug alone to your child to treat hepatitis C infection.
- A severe blood problem called hemolytic anemia has happened with this drug. This can make heart disease worse and lead to heart attacks, which can be deadly. Tell your doctor if you have ever had heart problems. Get medical help right away if you have chest pain while taking this drug.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will be done before starting this drug, while your child takes this drug, and for 9 months after the last dose.

If your child is pregnant:

- Do not give this drug to your child during pregnancy. Use during pregnancy may cause birth defects or loss of the unborn baby.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- Have your child use birth control while taking this drug and for 9 months after the last dose. If your child becomes pregnant, call the doctor right away.
- Do not give this drug to your child if his sex partner is pregnant. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child has a sex partner who may get pregnant, they must prevent pregnancy during treatment and for 6 months after the last dose.
- If your child's sex partner gets pregnant while your child takes this drug or within 6 months after the last dose, call the doctor right away.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat hepatitis C infection.
- This drug may be used along with interferon or peginterferon. If your child is using one of these drugs, read the patient fact sheet that comes with it.
- 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: Autoimmune hepatitis, liver problems other than hepatitis C, kidney problems, sickle cell anemia, or thalassemia major.
- If your child is taking didanosine.
- If your child is of childbearing age but is not using birth control or if your child is planning to get pregnant while taking this drug or within 9 months 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.
- Have your child's blood work and lung function checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- Your child may need to have an ECG checked while taking this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug does not stop the spread of hepatitis to others through blood, body fluids, or having sex. Be sure your child does not have any kind of sex without using a condom. Be sure needles and other injection equipment are not shared. Be sure personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them like toothbrushes or razors are not shared. Talk with your child's doctor or other health care provider about safe sex and other ways to have your child prevent spreading hepatitis to others.
- Watch for gout attacks.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- Take care of your child's teeth. See a dentist often.
- If your child throws up, have your child rinse the mouth out well.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- If giving this drug to your child and your child's weight changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.
- This drug may affect being able to father a child. Talk with the doctor.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- If your child has sex without using birth control, if you think your child may be pregnant, or if your child misses a period, call the doctor right away.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Tell the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about any risks to the baby.

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 a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Change in eyesight.
- Loss of eyesight.
- Pale skin.
- Feeling confused.
- Not able to focus.
- Period (menstrual) 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.

- Drugs like this one have raised the chance of suicidal thoughts or actions in children and young adults. The risk may be greater in people who have had these thoughts or actions in the past. All people who take this drug need to be watched closely. Call the doctor right away if signs like depression, nervousness, restlessness, grouchiness, panic attacks, or changes in mood or actions are new or worse. Call the doctor right away if any thoughts or actions of suicide occur.
- Low blood cell counts have happened with this drug. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or if your child feels very tired or weak.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

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:

- Trouble sleeping.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Hair loss.
- Muscle or joint pain.
- Dizziness.
- Dry skin.
- Dry mouth.

- Change in taste.
- Weight loss.
- Feeling tired.
- Flu-like signs. These include headache, weakness, fever, shakes, aches, pains, and sweating.

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 with food.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids every day unless told to drink less liquid by your child's doctor.
- 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.
- It is important that your child does not miss or skip a dose of this drug during treatment.
- Do not have your child use longer than you have been told by your child's doctor.

Tablets:

- If your child has trouble swallowing, talk with the doctor.

Capsules:

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.
- Do not open the capsules.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- 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 take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- If you are not sure what to do if your child misses a dose, call the doctor.

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

- Store at room temperature with the lid tightly closed.
- 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 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.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, 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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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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