PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Ruxolitinib (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.

Brand Names: US

Jakafi; Jakafi XR

Brand Names: Canada

Jakavi

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat graft-versus-host disease (GVHD).
- 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 an infection.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Kidney disease or liver disease.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Low white blood cell count, low platelet count, or low red blood cell count.
- If your child is taking fluconazole.

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.
- Have your child's blood work and skin checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your child's blood sugar closely.
- Treatment with this drug may lead to higher cholesterol and triglycerides. The effect of these changes on heart health is not known. 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.
- Some viral infections like herpes zoster (shingles) and herpes simplex have become active again with this drug. Tell the doctor if your child has ever had a viral infection like herpes zoster or herpes simplex. Talk with the doctor.
- 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 TB (tuberculosis) or has been close

to someone who has TB, talk with your child's doctor.

- If your child drinks grapefruit juice or eats grapefruit often, talk with your child's doctor.
- A study of a drug like this one in people with rheumatoid arthritis showed a higher risk of heart attack, stroke, blood clots, and death. These people were at least 50 years of age with at least 1 heart disease risk factor. It is not known if the raised risk happens with this drug.
- Lymphoma and other types of cancer have happened in studies of a drug like this one in people with rheumatoid arthritis. People who have smoked or had cancer in the past may have a higher risk. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Tell the doctor if your child smokes, has smoked in the past, or has ever had a heart attack, other heart problems, stroke, or blood clot.
- Some people have had severe health problems after stopping this drug. Do not stop giving this drug to your child without calling your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor right away if your child stops this drug and has a fever, trouble breathing, signs of low blood pressure like severe dizziness or passing out, or any bruising or bleeding. Call your child's doctor right away if your child stops this drug and has signs of organ problems like a

change in how much urine is passed, dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes. You may need to start giving this drug to your child again.

If your child is pregnant:

- Tell the doctor if your child is pregnant or becomes pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks of your child using this drug while pregnant.

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, or sweating; cough; muscle aches; shortness of breath; more sputum or

change in color of sputum; red, warm, swollen, painful, or blistered skin; weight loss; stomach pain; diarrhea; pain with passing urine; or passing urine more often.

- Signs of shingles like pain, itching, or tingling; fever; muscle aches; or rash (with or without blisters).
- 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 pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of low blood sugar like dizziness, headache, feeling sleepy, feeling weak, shaking, a fast heartbeat, confusion, hunger, or sweating.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Shortness of breath.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Swelling.
- Swollen gland, night sweats, shortness of breath, or weight loss without trying.
- Certain types of skin cancer have happened in people taking this drug. Call your child's doctor right away if

your child has a change in color or size of a mole, or any new or changing skin lump or growth.

- A severe brain problem called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) may happen with this drug. It may cause disability or death. Tell the doctor right away if your child has signs like confusion, memory problems, depression, change in the way your child acts, change in strength on 1 side is greater than the other, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, or change in eyesight.
- Blood clots may happen with this drug. These may include heart attack, stroke, and clots in the legs or lungs. Call the doctor right away if your child has chest, arm, back, neck, or jaw pain or pressure. Call the doctor if your child coughs up blood or has dizziness; cold sweats; numbness or weakness on 1 side of the body; drooping on 1 side of the face; trouble speaking or thinking; change in balance; change in eyesight; shortness of breath; or swelling, warmth, or pain in the leg or arm.

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:

- Diarrhea or constipation.
- Dizziness or headache.
- Muscle spasm.
- Muscle pain.
- Weight gain.
- Gas.

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:

- 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.
- Give this drug with or without food.

Tablet:

- Those who have feeding tubes may also use the tablet. Mix each tablet with 40 mL of water. Stir for 10 minutes. Give within 6 hours of mixing. Flush the feeding tube with water before and after this drug is given.
- If your child is on dialysis and is taking this drug on the day of dialysis, give it to your child after dialysis. If you have questions, talk with your child's doctor.

Extended-release tablets:

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

What do I do if my child misses a 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.

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

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Protect from light.
- 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.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-08-14

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

Ruxolitinib (Systemic - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center