



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Melphalan

This information from Lexicomp® 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**

Alkeran; Evomela

### **Brand Names: Canada**

Alkeran

### **Warning**

- 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.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Other types of cancer may rarely happen later in life.
- Allergic reactions may rarely occur.

### **What is this drug used for?**

- It is used to treat multiple myeloma.

- It is used to treat cancer of the ovary.
- 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 is breast-feeding a baby:**

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

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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 for your child to take this drug with all of his/her 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.
- 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.
- Constipation, diarrhea, throwing up, and upset stomach 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 go away, or are severe.
- To help with mouth sores, have your child use a soft toothbrush or cotton swabs and rinse the mouth. Do not let your child use mouth rinses that have alcohol in them.
- This drug may cause fertility problems. This may affect being able to have children later in life. Talk with the doctor.

### **If your child has menstrual periods:**

- This drug may cause the ovaries to not work. This may also cause menstrual periods to stop. Talk with the doctor.

### **If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- Have your child use birth control to prevent pregnancy

during treatment and for some time after the last dose. Talk with the doctor to see how long your child needs to use birth control after stopping this drug.

- If your child is a male and has sex with a female who could get pregnant, they must prevent pregnancy during treatment and for some time after his last dose. Talk with the doctor to see how long they must use birth control after your child stops this drug.
- If your child is a male and his sex partner gets pregnant while he takes this drug or within several months after his last dose, call the doctor right away.

### **If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:**

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- If your child gets pregnant while taking this drug or within several months after her last dose, 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:

### **All products:**

- 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 liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes, confusion, muscle pain or weakness, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, seizures, not hungry, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Pale skin.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Shortness of breath.
- Swelling.
- For females, no period.

- A skin lump or growth.
- Blurred eyesight.
- 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.

### **Injection:**

- 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.

### **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:

- Stomach pain.
- Not hungry.
- Change in taste.
- Hair loss.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Feeling tired or weak.

- Weight loss.

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.

### **Tablets:**

- Give this drug on an empty stomach. Give at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal.
- Give this drug at the same time of day.
- You will need to take special care when handling this drug. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to see how to handle this drug.

### **Injection:**

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.
- Other drugs may be given before this drug to help avoid side effects.

### **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

### **Tablets:**

- 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.

### **Injection:**

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

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

#### **Tablets:**

- Store in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- Protect from light.

#### **Injection:**

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

#### **All products:**

- 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 information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete

information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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