

Hydroxyurea

Other Names	<p>The generic drug name is hydroxyurea (hye-drox-ee-yoor-EE-a). Droxia® and Hydrea® are brand names. There may be other names for this medication.</p>
How is it Administered?	<p>Hydroxyurea is a capsule, taken by mouth. Take it exactly as directed. Swallow the capsules whole – do not split, chew, or crush them. Wear disposable gloves when handling the bottle or capsules. Wash your hands with soap and water before and after contact with the bottle or capsules. Do not open the capsules. Avoid exposure to crushed or opened capsules. If you touch the powder, wash your skin right away with soap and water. If powder from the capsule is spilled, wipe it up right away with a damp disposable towel. Place the towel and the empty capsule in a closed container, such as a plastic bag.</p>
Why am I Taking Hydroxyurea?	<p>This drug is used alone or with other medications to treat chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML), head and neck cancer, melanoma, and ovarian cancer that did not responded to standard treatment.</p>
How Does it Work?	<p>Cancers are diseases in which abnormal cells reproduce uncontrollably. Your chemo schedule is based upon your cancer type, how fast the cancer cells reproduce, and when the chemo is most effective. With these factors in mind, your doctors create a schedule that gives each chemo when it will damage the most cancer cells.</p> <p>Hydroxyurea is in a class of drugs known as antimetabolites. Antimetabolites are very similar to substances your body normally produces, so cells take in the drug. Once inside the cell, the drug stops the cell from reproducing, and it dies.</p> <p>The faster cells reproduce, the more likely it is that the hydroxyurea will damage or kill them. This means that some cells in your body that normally reproduce quickly, such as hair follicles, blood cells, and the cells that line the digestive tract, may also be affected. These normal cells will eventually grow back and be healthy. During treatment, however, you may experience side effects.</p>

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?

Tell your doctor if you:

- have had ever an allergic reaction to hydroxyurea or other medications
- have or have ever had kidney or liver disease
- have ever been treated with radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or hemodialysis
- are pregnant or breastfeeding
- have immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal, or diet supplements that you are taking.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Low blood counts – low levels of white blood cells, red blood cells, and/or platelets may increase your risk for infection, anemia and bleeding
- Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Mouth and/or throat sores
- Weight gain
- Rash, pale skin, and/or darkening of skin and nails; darkening of the skin in area where previous radiation treatment has been given
- Dizziness and/or headache
- Hair loss (mild thinning)
- Decreased fertility (both men and women)

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- To help avoid infections, stay away from people with colds or other infections. Wash your hands often. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations, such as a flu shot.
- If you are fatigued, take rests during the day, limit your activities, and do an activity when you feel a bit more energetic. Learn to ask for and accept help with chores.
- Be careful when handling sharp objects. Avoid rough sports and situations that could cause bruising or injury. Use an electric razor.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

How Can I Manage
These Side Effects?
(continued)

- Try eating smaller meals, more frequently to help with nausea. Avoid spicy and acidic foods.
- Mouth care is very important while taking this drug. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with a soft toothbrush. (Soften it further by running it under warm water before brushing.)
- Avoid smoking, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- Do not put anything on your rash unless you ask your doctor or nurse first. Keep the area clean and dry.
- Talk to the Resource Center staff about a wig/head covering before you have hair loss. The Resource Center is located on the 1st floor of the main hospital, inside the cafeteria. Their hours are 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday – Friday. Phone: **716-845-1729**.
- Drink at least 2-3 quarts of fluid, especially water, every 24 hours, unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.

When Should I Call
the Doctor?

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- any sign of an allergic reaction: itching or hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing, dizziness, or palpitations
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or phlegm /mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)
- any sign of infection: fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound
- yellowing of skin or eyes
- difficult or painful urination

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:

- Diarrhea of 5-6 stools in 1 day or diarrhea with weakness
- Nausea or vomiting that is not relieved by prescribed medication or that prevents you from eating and drinking
- Persistent loss of appetite or you lose 5 pounds in 1 week

What Else Should I
Know About
Hydroxyurea?

- Keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory.
- Your doctor will probably tell you to take another medication, folic acid (a vitamin), to decrease some of the side effects of this medication. Take this medication exactly as directed.
- Taking hydroxyurea may increase the risk that you will develop other cancers, including skin cancer. This risk may be greater if you take hydroxyurea for a long time.
- Do not get pregnant or father a child while taking hydroxyurea. Hydroxyurea may cause harm or death to the fetus. Discuss with your doctor when you may safely become pregnant or conceive a child after therapy.
- Women who are taking hydroxyurea, or whose male partners are taking hydroxyurea, may be less likely to become pregnant. Do NOT, however, assume that you or your partner cannot become pregnant during your treatment. Use a reliable method of birth control to prevent pregnancy while you are taking hydroxyurea and for 6 months afterwards.
- People who are not taking Hydroxyurea should not be exposed to it. If powder from a capsule spills, it should be wiped with a damp disposable towel, placed in a plastic bag, and discarded. Hands should be washed thoroughly.
- If you miss a dose or forget to take your medicine, take it as soon as you can. If it is almost time for your next dose, wait until then to take the medicine and skip the missed dose. Do not use extra medicine to make up for a missed dose.
- Store the medicine at room temperature in a closed container, away from heat, moisture, and direct light.
- If you would like more information about hydroxyurea, talk to your doctor.