

Temozolomide

Names

The generic drug name is temozolomide (te-moe-ZOE-loe-mide). The brand name is Temodar ®. There may be other brand names for this medication.

How is Temozolomide Administered?

Temozolomide comes as a capsule and is taken by mouth, usually once a day for 5 days. After 28 days, you take another 5 days of the medication. Your full dose may contain two or more different strength capsules. Temozolomide is a capsule. Take it once a day on an empty stomach, either 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals. Taking it at bedtime may help lessen the changes of an upset stomach or nausea.

What Is It Used For?

This drug is used to treat some types of brain tumors, including astrocytomas. If a drug has been approved for one use, physicians may elect to use this same drug for other problems if they believe it may be helpful.

How Does it Work?

Cancer is a group of diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Both normal and cancer cells go through cycles that include a resting phase, active growing phases, and division. Your chemotherapy schedule is based upon the type of cancer you have, the rate at which they divide, and the times when each drug is the most likely to be effective. This is why chemotherapy is typically given in cycles.

Temozolomide is in a class of drugs known as alkylating agents, specifically it is an imidazotetrazine derivative. Alkylating agents are most active in the resting phase of the cell cycle (of growth and reproduction).

Temozolomide acts as a "pro-drug", which means your body will turn it into its active form, the form that fights cancer.

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?

Tell your doctor if you:

- are allergic to temozolomide, dacarbazine, or any other drugs
- if you have or have ever had kidney or liver disease
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

These drugs can interact with other medications. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal, or diet supplements that you take.

Please let your doctor know if you have had any allergic reactions or side effects to any medicines you have received in the past.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation
- Headache
- Low blood counts (decreased red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets) increase your risk of fatigue, infections, and bleeding problems
- Fatigue, weakness
- Rash, itching

These side effects may show up later on, though it is not clear if they are caused by the brain tumor or the medication):

- Swelling (edema)
- Problems of the central nervous system (CNS): Balance problems, dizziness, weakness to one side of body (hemiparesis), seizures, or excessive sleepiness. When used in treatment of brain tumors it is difficult to distinguish if these effects are due more to medication or disease.

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Eat small, frequent meals.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about obtaining a wig before you experience hair loss.
- Keep your bowels moving. Your health care provider may prescribe a stool softener to help prevent constipation. Drink 2 to 3 quarts of fluid every 24 hours, unless you were told to restrict your fluid intake. Talk to your doctor before taking any type of medication for constipation.

- Mouth care is very important. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ tsp of baking soda in 8 oz 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.
- Avoid sun exposure. Wear SPF 30 (or higher) sunblock and protective clothing.
- If you are dizzy or fatigued, avoid driving, using machines, or doing anything else that could be dangerous if you are not alert.
- If you get a rash, talk to your doctor before putting any type of cream or lotion on it.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have:

- signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives.
- chest pain or signs of stroke, confusion, agitation, hallucinations, fainting, or seizures

Please let us know if you go to the emergency room or are admitted to the hospital.

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- 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 at IV site/wound
- 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 mucus, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)
- seizures

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Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:

- nausea, vomiting, or headache that is not relieved by prescribed medication
- unusual weakness or extreme fatigue that interferes with self-care activities
- constipation that is not relieved by prescribed laxatives
- 4-6 episodes of diarrhea in a day, or diarrhea accompanied by dizziness or weakness
- inability to eat or drink for 24 hours or signs of dehydration: thirst, dry mouth, dark urine, scant urination, dizziness, tiredness, headache, skin that does not return to normal shape after being pulled into a tent shape

What Else Should I Know About Temozolomide?

- Swallow the capsules whole with a glass of water, on an empty stomach. Do not split, open, or chew the capsules. (Some doctor may recommend you take it at bedtime.)
- If a capsule opens, be careful not to get the contents on the skin around your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you get it on your skin, wash it right away with soap and water. Call your caregiver right away.
- If you vomit right after you take the medicine, call your doctor.
- Call your doctor for instructions if you miss a dose.
- Store the medicine at room temperature, away from heat and moisture.
- Make sure you keep all appointments with your doctor and lab.
- Do not get pregnant, or get your partner pregnant, while you are taking temozolomide. This drug may harm the fetus. Use an effective form of birth control while you are being treated with this medicine. Barrier methods such as condoms and diaphragms are recommended.
- Do not breastfeed while you are taking this medicine.
- If you would like more information about temozolomide, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.