

## Etoposide - Oral

Names	The generic drug name is (oral) etoposide(e-toe-POE-side). The brand name of oral etoposide is VePesid®. There may be other names for this medication, such as VP-16.
Why am I Taking Oral Etoposide?	Etoposide is used to treat certain types of many cancers – though sometimes it is given as an IV (intravenous) medication, not as a capsule. It is used to treat cancers of the lung, testicle, bladder, prostate, uterus, and stomach, as well as lymphomas, neuroblastoma, and some types of sarcomas.
How is it Given?	This drug is taken by mouth, as a capsule, usually once a day for 4-5 days in a row. This is repeated every 3 or 4 weeks. Take the capsule around the same time every day; you may take it with food.
How Does it Work?	<p>Cancer is a group of diseases in which abnormal cells divide (reproduce) without control. Chemotherapy drugs identify and target cancer cells based on their fast rate of reproduction. Your chemotherapy schedule is based upon the type of cancer you have, the rate at which the cancer cells reproduce, and when the drug is the most likely to be effective. This is why chemotherapy is typically given in cycles.</p> <p>Etoposide is a podopyllotoxin and a topoisomerase inhibitor. It attacks the cancer cells during their reproduction cycle. The faster cells are reproducing, the more likely it is that chemotherapy will damage/kill the cells. Unfortunately, normal cells that divide quickly are also 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?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are allergic to etoposide, or have any allergies</li><li>• recently or currently have an infection or you are taking antibiotics</li><li>• have or have ever had heart, liver, or kidney disease; hearing problems; or radiation therapy to your head</li><li>• drink large amounts of alcohol or have done so in the past</li><li>• are pregnant or breastfeeding</li></ul>

**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, or herbal supplements you take.**

#### What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Low white blood cell and platelet counts (Increased risk for infection and bleeding)
- Hair loss or thinning (usually temporary)
- Decreased fertility (both men and women)
- Nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite
- Diarrhea
- Mouth and/or throat sores
- Numbness or tingling in fingers, hands, toes, or feet (peripheral neuropathy)
- Radiation recall (severe redness of the skin in an area that was previously received radiation therapy)

#### How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Drink 2-3 quarts a day to help to help prevent dehydration and constipation, unless your doctor has told you to limit your fluid intake.
- To help prevent infection: Avoid people with colds or infections; do not get any vaccinations without first getting your doctor's permission; **wash your hands often.**
- To help prevent bleeding: Avoid contact sports or activities that could cause injury. Use an electric razor.
- Hair loss: Some people cut their hair once it begins to fall out. Roswell Park's wig program provides 1 wig and 1 head covering at no cost. Visit the Resource Center for Patients and Families, located inside the cafeteria on the 1st floor of the main hospital. **716-845-1729.**
- Nausea: Avoid fried, spicy, and fatty foods. Eating small, frequent meals may also help. If you have nausea, try foods and drinks that are 'easy on the stomach' - bland foods, ginger ale, dry crackers, toast.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Mouth care is very important. 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 by running it under warm water before brushing.) Avoid smoking, alcohol and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- Stay out of the sun and avoid tanning beds. If out in the sun, wear protective clothing and a sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher.

When Should I  
Call the  
Doctor?

**Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- signs of an allergic reaction: itching, hives. Call 911 if you have swelling in mouth, tongue, or throat; chest tightness, trouble breathing, dizziness, or palpitations
- signs 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 or skin irritation
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous nose bleeds, or a rash of pinpoint reddish-purple spots just under the skin (petechiae)
- sudden weakness or extreme fatigue
- vomit immediately after taking your etoposide

**Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:**

- numbness or tingling in hands or feet or difficulty walking
- painful mouth or throat that makes it difficult to eat or drink
- uncontrolled nausea that prevents you from eating or drinking
- vomiting more than twice in one day
- diarrhea of 4 stools or more in 24 hours or diarrhea with weakness

What Else  
Should I Know  
About  
Etoposide?

- Do not breastfeed while taking etoposide.
- Do not use aspirin or any product that has aspirin in it (such as some cold medicines) unless you have talked to your doctor first.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while being treated with this medicine.
- Do not get pregnant or father a child while taking this medication; it may harm the fetus. Use an effective method of birth control. Barrier methods such as condoms are recommended. If you think you have become pregnant while using this medicine, tell your doctor right away. Genetic counseling is available to discuss the effect of this drug therapy on future pregnancies.
- Call your doctor for instructions if you miss a dose.
- You should be aware that etoposide could potentially cause cancer in the future. Talk to your doctor about this potential risk.
- Oral capsules are stable at room temperature for several months but should be refrigerated for long-term storage. Do not freeze them.
- If you would like more information about etoposide, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.