Patient Education

Temozolomide (te-moe-ZOE-loe-mide)

Brand Names
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.

What Is It Used For?
This drug is used to treat some types of brain tumors, including astrocytomas.

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 alkalyting agents, specifically it is an imidazotetrazine derivative. Alkylating agents are most active in the resting phase of the cell.
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 Taking Temozolomide?
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

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

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?
• Loss of appetite, stomach pain or cramps, nausea and/or vomiting
Side Effects I May Experience?

- Constipation
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Breast pain (women)
- Anxiety and/or difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Back pain
- Vision changes
- Nose bleeds
- Hair loss
- Urinary incontinence
- Weight gain

Possible Delayed Effects:

- Swelling (edema) of hands, feet, ankles, or lower legs
- Central Nervous System (symptoms of toxicity): dizziness, balance problems, hemiparesis (weakness on one side of the body), seizures, and/or excessive sleepiness
- Diarrhea
- Weakness
- Skin rash, Itching, and/or discoloration

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 15 (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 your doctor immediately if you experience:**
- any sign of infection: fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, or at an IV site or wound of any kind
- 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)
- seizures

**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?

- This drug may cause bone marrow depression, which can increase your risk for infection, fatigue, and bleeding. To help avoid infections, stay away from crowds or people with colds, flu, or other infections. Wash your hands often. Be careful when handling sharp objects. Stay away from rough sports or other situations where you could be bruised, cut, or injured. Use an electric razor. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations.
- 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.
- Do not breastfeed while you are taking this medicine.
- If you vomit right after you take the medicine, call your doctor.
• 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.

• 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.

• If you would like more information about temozolomide, talk to your doctor.