

Arsenic Trioxide (Trisenox)

About This Drug

Arsenic trioxide is used to treat cancer. It is given in the vein (IV).

Possible Side Effects

- Rapid increase in your white blood cells
- Increased heart rate and/or abnormal electrocardiogram (EKG/ECG)
- Sore throat
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)
- Pain in your abdomen
- Fever
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Blood sugar levels may change
- Electrolyte changes
- Headache
- Numbness, tingling or a sensation of pins and needles in your arms, hands, legs or feet
- Pain in the joints
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble breathing
- Cough
- Rash and/or itching

Note: Each of the side effects above was reported in 30% or greater of patients treated with arsenic trioxide. Not all possible side effects are included above.

Warnings and Precautions

- A serious syndrome may happen with the use of this drug that is known as differentiation syndrome, which can be life-threatening. It can cause fever, weight gain, swelling, and breathing problems. **Immediately report any of these symptoms to your healthcare provider.**



- Abnormal heartbeat and abnormal electrocardiogram (EKG/ECG), which can be life-threatening
- Changes in your liver function
- This drug may raise your risk of getting a second cancer
- Changes in your central nervous system such as Wernicke's encephalopathy can happen which can be life-threatening. The central nervous system is made up of your brain and spinal cord. You could feel extreme tiredness, agitation, confusion, have hallucinations (see or hear things that are not there), trouble understanding or speaking, loss of control of your bowels or bladder, eyesight changes, numbness or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body, seizures or coma. If you start to have any of these symptoms let your doctor know right away.

Note: *Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.*

Important Information

- This drug may be present in the saliva, tears, sweat, urine, stool, vomit, semen, and vaginal secretions. Talk to your doctor and/or your nurse about the necessary precautions to take during this time.
- Wernicke's encephalopathy is a condition that can be caused by a lack of thiamine (vitamin B1) because of alcoholism, poor nutrition, and other medical conditions. It can be prevented and treated with thiamine replacement therapy. Please let your doctor know if you have a history of a thiamine deficiency or any of the conditions above.

Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day. Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- If you throw up or have diarrhea, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid).
- If you have diarrhea, eat low-fiber foods that are high in protein and calories and avoid foods that can irritate your digestive tracts or lead to cramping.
- Ask your nurse or doctor about medicine that can lessen or stop your diarrhea.
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- If you have diabetes, keep good control of your blood sugar level. Tell your nurse or your doctor if your glucose levels are higher or lower than normal.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.
- If you have numbness and tingling in your hands and feet, be careful when cooking, walking, and handling sharp objects and hot liquids.
- To help with itching, moisturize your skin several times day.
- Avoid sun exposure and apply sunscreen routinely when outdoors.



- If you get a rash do not put anything on it unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean and dry. Ask your doctor for medicine if your rash bothers you.

Food and Drug Interactions

- There no known interactions of arsenic trioxide with food.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about all other prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) you are taking before starting this medicine as there are known drug interactions with arsenic trioxide. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills
- Headache that does not go away
- Extreme tiredness, agitation, or confusion
- Symptoms of a seizure such as confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**
- Hallucinations
- Trouble understanding or speaking
- Loss of control of bowels or bladder
- Blurry vision or changes in your eyesight
- Numbness or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body
- Cough that is bothersome
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way (palpitations)
- Diarrhea, 4 times in one day or diarrhea with lack of strength or a feeling of being dizzy
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Abnormal blood sugar
- Unusual thirst, passing urine often, headache, sweating, shakiness, irritability
- Pain that does not go away, or is not relieved by prescribed medicines



- New rash and/or itching
- Rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Numbness, tingling, pins and needles, or pain in your arms, hands, legs or feet
- Signs of differentiation syndrome such as fever, weight gain, swelling, dizziness/lightheadedness, and/or trouble breathing.
- Signs of possible liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, pain in your abdomen, feeling very tired and weak, unusual itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin
- If you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for 6 months after stopping treatment. Men with female partners of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during and for 3 months after stopping treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for 2 weeks after stopping treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men, this drug may affect your ability to have children in the future. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm banking.

Revised June 2022

