

Fluorouracil

About This Drug

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

Possible Side Effects

- Blurred vision or other changes in eyesight
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)
- Sores that may cause pain or bleeding in your digestive tract
- Soreness of the mouth and throat. You may have red areas, white patches, or sores that hurt.
- Allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis are rare but may happen in some patients. Signs of allergic reaction to this drug may be swelling of the face, feeling like your tongue or throat are swelling, trouble breathing, rash, itching, fever, chills, feeling dizzy, and/or feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way. **If this happens, do not take another dose of this drug. You should get urgent medical treatment.**
- Sensitivity to sunlight/light (photosensitivity). Photosensitivity means that you may become more sensitive to the sun and/or light. You may get a skin rash/reaction if you are in the sun or are exposed to sun lamps and tanning beds. Your eyes may water more, mostly in bright light.
- Changes in your nail color, nail loss and/or brittle nail
- Darkening of the skin, or changes to the color of your skin and/or veins used for infusion
- Dry skin or itching
- Headache
- Nosebleed

Note: *Not all possible side effects are included above.*

Warnings and Precautions

- Severe bone marrow suppression which can be life-threatening. This is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This may raise your risk of infection, make you tired and weak, and raise your risk of bleeding.
- Heart changes such as abnormal heartbeat, heart attack and/or congestive heart failure - your heart is not pumping blood as well as it should be, and fluid can build up in your body.

- Hand-foot syndrome. The palms of your hands or soles of your feet may tingle, become numb, painful, swollen, or red.
- Changes in your central nervous system can happen. The central nervous system is made up of your brain and spinal cord. You could feel extreme tiredness, agitation, confusion, 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, or coma. **If you start to have any of these symptoms let your doctor know right away.**
- Severe diarrhea
- Patients with a specific enzyme deficiency called dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency may be at risk for severe side effects.

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.

Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To help decrease the risk of infections, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Check with your nurse before using dental floss.
- Be very careful when using knives or tools.
- Use an electric shaver instead of a razor.
- If you have a nosebleed, sit with your head tipped slightly forward. Apply pressure by lightly pinching the bridge of your nose between your thumb and forefinger. Call your doctor if you feel dizzy or faint or if the bleeding doesn't stop after 10 to 15 minutes.
- 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).
- 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 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 diarrhea.



- Mouth care is very important. Your mouth care should consist of routine, gentle cleaning of your teeth or dentures and rinsing your mouth with a mixture of 1/2 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of water or 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water. This should be done at least after each meal and at bedtime.
- If you have mouth sores, avoid mouthwash that has alcohol. Also avoid alcohol and smoking because they can bother your mouth and throat.
- Keeping your nails moisturized may help with brittleness.
- To help with dry skin or itching, moisturize your skin several times day.
- Use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher when you are outdoors even for a short time. Cover up when you are out in the sun. Wear wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Keep your neck, chest, and back covered. Wear dark sunglasses when in the sun or bright lights.
- 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.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.

Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of fluorouracil 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 fluorouracil. 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.
- There are known interactions of fluorouracil with blood thinning medicine such as warfarin. Ask your doctor what precautions you should take.

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
- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Nosebleed that doesn't stop bleeding after 10-15 minutes
- Trouble breathing
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way (palpitations)
- Chest pain or symptoms of a heart attack. Most heart attacks involve pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. The pain may go away and come back or it can be constant. It can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. Sometimes pain is felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. **If any of these symptoms last 2 minutes, call 911.**
- Extreme tiredness, confusion and/or agitation
- Hallucinations



- Trouble understanding or speaking
- Loss of control of bowels or bladder
- Blurry vision or changes in your eyesight
- Headache that does not go away
- Numbness or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Diarrhea, 4 times in one day or diarrhea with lack of strength or a feeling of being dizzy
- Pain in your mouth or throat that makes it hard to eat or drink
- Pain along the digestive tract, especially if worse after eating
- Blood in your vomit (bright red or coffee-ground) and/or stools (bright red, or black/tarry)
- Coughing up blood
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Swelling of the legs, feet, or ankles
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Painful, red, or swollen areas on your hands or feet
- Signs of inflammation/infection (redness, swelling, pain) of the tissue around your nails
- A new rash and/or itching or a rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Dry skin that is bothersome
- Develop sensitivity to sunlight/light
- Numbness and/or tingling of your hands and/or feet
- Signs of allergic reaction: swelling of the face, feeling like your tongue or throat are swelling, trouble breathing, rash, itching, fever, chills, feeling dizzy, and/or feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way. **If this happens, call 911 for emergency care.**
- If you think you are pregnant or may have impregnated your partner

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug may have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for up to 3 months after stopping treatment. Men with female partners of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment 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:** It is not known if this drug passes into breast milk. For this reason, women should not breastfeed during treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men and women both, 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 or egg banking.

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