



## Melphalan: High-Dose for SCT

*Other Names: Alkeran®*

### About This Drug

Melphalan is used to treat cancer in patients who will get a blood or bone marrow transplant. This drug is given in the vein (IV).

### Possible Side Effects (More Common)

- Bone marrow depression. 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 (fatigue), and raise your risk of bleeding.
- Nausea and throwing up (vomiting). These symptoms may happen within a few hours after treatment and may last up to 48 hours. Medicines are available to stop or lessen these side effects.
- Soreness of the mouth and throat. You may have red areas, white patches, or sores that hurt.
- Hair loss: Hair loss is often complete scalp hair loss and can involve loss of eyebrows, eyelashes, and pubic hair. You may notice this a few days or weeks after treatment has started.
- Loose bowel movements (diarrhea) that may last for a few days
- Electrolyte changes. Your blood will be checked for electrolyte changes as needed.
- Rash

### Possible Side Effects (Less Common)

- Changes in lung tissue may happen with large amounts of this drug. These changes may not last forever, and your lung tissue may go back to normal. Sometimes these changes may not be seen for many years. You may get a cough or have trouble catching your breath.
- Skin and tissue irritation may involve redness, pain, warmth, or swelling at the IV site. This happens if the drug leaks out of the vein and into nearby tissue.
- Tingling or warmth sensation may happen while this drug is infused in a vein (IV)
- Bladder irritation

## Allergic Reactions

Allergic reactions to this drug are rare, but may happen. Signs of allergic reactions 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.

## Treating Side Effects

- 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.
- Avoid mouthwash that has alcohol. Avoid alcohol and smoking because they can bother your mouth and throat.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about medicine to help stop or lessen nausea and throwing up.
- While you are getting this drug in your vein, tell your nurse right away if you experience any pain, redness, or swelling at the site of the IV
- Drink 6-8 cups of fluids every day unless your doctor has told you to limit your fluid intake due to some other health problem. A cup is 8 ounces of fluid. If you throw up or have loose bowel movements, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body due to losing too much fluid).
- 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.

## Important Information

- If you have kidney problems, your kidney function will be checked as needed.
- This drug may cause an increased risk of getting a second cancer

## Food and Drug Interactions

There are no known interactions of melphalan with food. This drug may interact with other medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of the medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) that you are taking at this time. The safety and use of dietary supplements and alternative diets are often not known. Using these might affect your cancer or interfere with your treatment. Until more is known, you should not use dietary supplements or alternative diets without your cancer doctor's help.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse **right away** if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fever of 100.5 F (38 C) or above

- Chills
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Wheezing or trouble breathing
- Rash or itching
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way (palpitations)
- Loose bowel movements (diarrhea) more than 4 times a day or diarrhea with weakness or feeling lightheaded
- Blurred vision or other changes in eyesight
- Pain when passing urine; blood in urine
- Pain in your lower back or side
- Feeling confused or agitated
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- 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. 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.
- Symptoms of a stroke such as sudden numbness or weakness of your face, arm, or leg, mostly on one side of your body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, feeling dizzy, loss of balance or coordination; or sudden, bad headache with no known cause. If you have any of these symptoms last for 2 minutes, call 911.
- Signs of liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, bad stomach pain, feeling very tired and weak, itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin,

Call your doctor or nurse **as soon as possible** if any of these symptoms happen:

- Change in hearing, ringing in the ears
- Decreased urine
- Unusual thirst or passing urine often
- Pain in your mouth or throat that makes it hard to eat or drink
- Nausea that is not relieved by prescribed medicines.
- Rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines.
- Heavy menstrual period that lasts longer than normal
- Numbness, tingling, decreased feeling or weakness in fingers, toes, arms, or legs
- Trouble walking or changes in the way you walk, feeling clumsy when buttoning clothes, opening jars, or other routine hand motions.
- Swelling of legs, ankles, or feet
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Loss of appetite or rapid weight loss of five pounds in a week
- Fatigue that interferes with your daily activities

- Unusual thirst or frequent urination
- Headache that does not go away.
- Painful, red, or swollen areas on your hands or feet.
- No bowel movement for 3 days or you feel uncomfortable
- Extreme weakness that interferes with normal activities

## Sexual Problems and Reproduction Concerns

- **Infertility warning:** Sexual problems and reproduction concerns may happen. In both men and women, this drug may affect your ability to have children. This cannot be determined before your treatment. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm or egg banking.
  - In men, this drug may interfere with your ability to make sperm, but it should not change your ability to have sexual relations.
  - In women, menstrual bleeding may become irregular or stop while you are getting this drug. Do not assume that you cannot become pregnant if you do not have a menstrual period.
  - Women may go through signs of menopause (change of life) like vaginal dryness or itching. Vaginal lubricants can be used to lessen vaginal dryness, itching, and pain during sexual relations.
  - Genetic counseling is available for you to talk about the effects of this drug therapy on future pregnancies. Also, a genetic counselor can look at the possible risk of problems in the unborn baby due to this medicine if an exposure happens during pregnancy.
- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug may have harmful effects on the unborn child, so effective methods of birth control should be used during your cancer treatment.
- **Breast feeding warning:** Women should not breast feed during treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and badly harm a breast feeding baby.

Revised July 2014