

FLUDARABINE TABLET

Other names: Fludara®



Important note: The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

Why you are taking this medication

Fludarabine (floo-DAR-ah-been) is a medicine that is used to treat many kinds of cancer. It is a tablet that you take by mouth. The tablet contains lactose.

Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or allergic reaction to fludarabine before taking fludarabine.

Take fludarabine at approximately the same time each day. Fludarabine may be taken with food or on an empty stomach, with a glass of water or juice. Tablets must be swallowed whole. Do not chew, break or crush the tablets.

If you vomit within one hour of taking fludarabine, check with your doctor. You will be told whether to take the dose again or to wait until your next scheduled dose.

If you miss a dose of fludarabine, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, contact your doctor during office hours to ask about making up the missing dose.

Your doctor may tell you to drink plenty of liquids (8 cups or 2,000mL a day). This helps prevent kidney problems.

Store fludarabine tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture. Leave the tablets in the blister packages until you are ready to take them.

A blood test may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.

Some immunisations (flu shots and vaccines) may be less effective during or within one year of fludarabine treatment. Some immunisations should not be used during or within one year of treatment. Talk to your doctor before receiving any immunisations.

Tell other doctors or dentists that you are being treated with fludarabine before you receive any treatment from them.

Other medication

Other drugs may interact with fludarabine. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new medicines.

Alcohol (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of fludarabine.

Pregnancy and breast feeding

It is not known if fludarabine causes sterility in men or menopause in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with fludarabine.

It is best to use birth control while being treated with fludarabine and for at least six months after your last treatment. Fludarabine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy.

Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant.

Do not breast feed during treatment.

Side effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Changes in your blood

This medicine may cause temporary changes in your blood. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by performing blood tests. Adjustment of your treatment may be needed in certain circumstances.

EFFECT ON YOUR BLOOD	WHAT TO DO
<p>Normal white blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection.</p> <p>When they are low you are at greater risk of having an infection.</p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the toilet. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • See your doctor <i>immediately</i> at the first sign of an infection such as fever (a body temperature of 38°C or more by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
<p>Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury.</p> <p>When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed.</p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft

EFFECT ON YOUR BLOOD	WHAT TO DO
	<p>toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene.</p> <p>Some medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by a doctor. • For minor pain, try paracetamol first.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
<p>Nausea and vomiting does not usually occur with fludarabine.</p>	
<p>Skin rashes may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>To help itching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can use calamine lotion. • If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours. • Otherwise make sure to mention it at you next visit.
<p>Diarrhoea may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>To help diarrhoea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods.
<p>Loss of appetite may sometimes occur and may persist for 1-2 months after stopping fludarabine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat often in small amounts.
<p>Headache may rarely occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paracetamol may be used for this.
<p>Muscle or joint pain may sometimes occur a few days after your treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paracetamol may be used for this. Tell your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.
<p>Swelling of hands, feet or lower legs may occur if your body retains extra fluid.</p>	<p>If swelling is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your feet when sitting. • Avoid tight clothing.
<p>Tiredness and lack of energy may sometimes occur and may persist after stopping fludarabine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.
<p>Numbness or tingling of the fingers or toes may sometimes occur. This will slowly return to normal once your treatments are over but may take several months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be careful when handling sharp, hot or cold items. • Tell your doctor at your next visit if you are having trouble with buttons, writing or picking up small objects.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
Blurred vision may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your doctor during office hours if you notice any changes in your vision.
Hair loss is rare with fludarabine. If you lose hair it will grow back once you stop treatment with fludarabine. Colour and texture may change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with the use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.

Stop taking fludarabine and see your doctor or get emergency help immediately if you have:

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling or breathing problems.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (a body temperature of 38°C or more by an oral thermometer); shaking chills; cough; sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum), cloudy or foul smelling urine, painful, tender or swollen red skin wounds or sores.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools (bowel motions); blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on your skin, extensive bruising.
- Signs of **heart problems** such as a fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain or pressure.
- **Seizures** or **loss of consciousness**.

See your doctor as soon as possible (during office hours) if you have:

- Signs of **anaemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **heart problems** such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, swelling of your feet or lower legs.
- Increased **sore throat or mouth** that makes it difficult to swallow comfortably.
- **Changes in eyesight.**
- Signs of **gout** such as joint pain.
- Chronic **cough** or **shortness of breath**.

Check with your doctor if any of the following continue or bother you:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Difficulty thinking clearly and logically.
- For diabetics: uncontrolled blood sugars.
- Difficult, painful or frequent urination.
- Ringing in your ears or hearing problems.
- Headache not controlled with paracetamol.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on you lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Depression or agitation that is unusual for you.

Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist