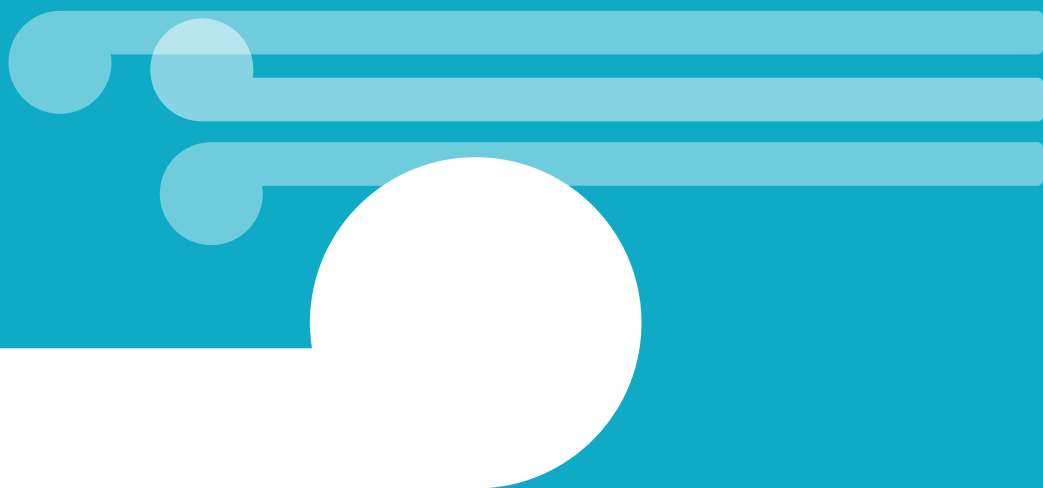


Capecitabine

Patient information



FAQs

Definition: **Where the term doctor or nurse is mentioned, this refers to your oncologist or oncology nurse. Capecitabine can only be dispensed at the hospital pharmacy.**

Q What is capecitabine?

A Capecitabine is an oral chemotherapy medication for the treatment of many cancers including breast, colorectal, stomach and oesophageal. Capecitabine tablets come in two strengths: 150mg and 500mg.

Q How does capecitabine work?

A Capecitabine is converted in the tumour (or cancer) to the substance *5-fluorouracil*. This substance can kill cancer cells and decrease the size of the tumour.

Q Who should not take capecitabine?

A Patients with a known allergy to *5-fluorouracil* should not take capecitabine. In addition, studies in animals suggest capecitabine may cause harm to an unborn child. No studies have been undertaken in pregnant women. If you are pregnant, be sure to discuss with your doctor whether capecitabine is right for you. Also tell your oncologist if you are breast-feeding or are planning to breast-feed. Capecitabine should not be given to children.

Q What should I tell my doctor before starting capecitabine?

A If you have the following health problems it is important to inform your oncologist: • heart disease • kidney disease • diarrhoea • liver disease

Q How long will I have to take capecitabine?

A Capecitabine may be taken for 14 days followed by a 7-day rest period (no capecitabine), given as a 21-day cycle. It may also be prescribed on a continuous basis at a lower dose.

Your doctor will determine how many cycles of capecitabine treatment you will have.

Q How should I take capecitabine?

A Your doctor will prescribe a dose and treatment regimen that is right for you. Capecitabine tablets are taken twice daily, in the morning and in the evening. Your doctor may want you to take a combination of 150mg and 500mg tablets for each dose. If a combination of tablets is prescribed, it is very important that you correctly identify the tablets. Taking the wrong tablets could result in side effects. The 150mg tablets are pink in colour and have '150' engraved on one side. The 500mg tablets are larger, pink in colour and are plain on both sides.

- Take the tablets in the combination prescribed by your doctor for your morning and evening doses.
- Take the tablets within 30 minutes after the end of a meal (breakfast and dinner).
- Capecitabine tablets should be swallowed whole with a glass of water only.
- It is important that you take all your medication as prescribed by your doctor.

Q What if I miss a dose?

A If you miss a dose of capecitabine by more than 2 hours, do NOT take the missed dose at all and do NOT double the next dose. Instead, continue your regular dosing schedule and check with your doctor or pharmacist.

Q What are the most common side effects of capecitabine?

A The most common side effects of capecitabine are: diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, mouth ulcers, abdominal pain, constipation, loss of appetite or decreased appetite, excessive water loss from the body (dehydration), hand-and-foot syndrome (palms of the hands or soles of the feet tingle, become numb, painful, swollen, blister or become red), rash, dry or itchy skin, with increased sensitivity to the sun and sunburn, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache and fever.

A less common but serious side effect can be chest pain (heart pain/ angina). You must seek URGENT medical attention DAY or NIGHT should this occur.

Q When should I call my doctor/nurse?

A If you are concerned about a side effect call your doctor or nurse. This will help reduce the likelihood that the side effect will continue or become severe. Your doctor may instruct you to decrease the dose and/or temporarily discontinue treatment with capecitabine.

If you are taking warfarin (also known as Coumadin®, Marevan®) please inform your doctor. Your doctor may need to perform more frequent checks on how quickly your blood is clotting.

If you are taking phenytoin (Dilantin®), a medicine used in epilepsy and in heart irregularities, please inform your doctor.

Contact your doctor or nurse immediately for advice if any of these symptoms occur:

Diarrhoea: If you have 3 or 4 more bowel movements than normal each day.

- Any diarrhoea at night.
- For those that have an ostomy bag, if the bag contents become more watery or you need to empty the bag more often.

Vomiting: If you vomit more than once in a 24-hour time period.

Nausea: If you feel nauseated (sick, ‘squirmy’ upset stomach”), If you lose your appetite, and the amount of food you eat each day is much less than usual.

Mouth ulcers: If you have redness, swelling, or ulcers, and pain is present.

Hand-and-Foot Syndrome: If you have swelling, redness or blistering of the hands and/or feet, and pain is present.

Fever or infection: If you have a high temperature or other evidence of infection.

Chest pain: Rarely, heart pain/angina can occur with capecitabine. If you experience chest pain, please seek medical advice as soon as possible. Please go to the nearest emergency department if the pain is severe or lasts longer than 20-30 minutes.

If caught early, these side effects usually improve within 2 or 3 days after you stop taking capecitabine. If they don't improve within 2 to 3 days, call your doctor again.

After side effects have improved your doctor will tell you whether to start taking capecitabine again and, if so, what dose to use.



How are the side effects of capecitabine managed?

A Your doctor and nurse will manage your side effects according to their nature and severity. For example, you may be prescribed additional medications to manage vomiting and diarrhoea to reduce and alleviate these effects.

If the side effect was severe enough that you stopped taking capecitabine, your doctor will want to make sure the problem gets better before restarting your treatment. At this time, your doctor may decide to reduce your dose of capecitabine. It is important that you follow your doctor and nurse's advice about the management of your side effects. Failing to do so may be detrimental to your health.

Q Is it safe to handle capecitabine?

A Yes. Capecitabine is not absorbed through the skin, even if it gets wet, however you should not allow children to handle the medication.

Q Suppose I stop taking capecitabine because of a side effect. After the side effect goes away, my doctor tells me to start taking capecitabine again, but at a lower dosage. Do I still have to watch for side effects?

A Yes. The key to taking capecitabine is to be watchful for side effects. If the original side effect happens again, or if you experience a different problem, call your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for advice.

Q Can I be sure that capecitabine will still be effective at a lower dose?

A Even if your doctor needs you to reduce your dose of capecitabine, you can be sure that it remains effective (this has been demonstrated in clinical studies of capecitabine).

Q Does capecitabine cause hair loss or bone marrow suppression? (when your body produces fewer red and white blood cells)?

A In clinical studies of capecitabine, hair loss was reported in about 5% of patients. Mild to moderate bone marrow suppression was common. However, severe or life-threatening neutropenia (low white blood cells) or thrombocytopenia (low blood clotting cells) or anaemia (low iron levels) occurred in less than 3% of patients.

Q How should I store and use capecitabine?

A

- Never share capecitabine with anyone.
- Capecitabine should be stored at normal room temperature below 30°C.
- Keep this and all other medications out of the reach of children.
- in case of accidental ingestion or if you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medication has been taken, contact your doctor or pharmacist in the first instance or go to the nearest emergency department immediately.

The National Poisons Information Centre is also available for advice on 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766



Can I take other medications while I am taking capecitabine?

A No formal drug interaction studies have been conducted. However you should tell your doctor and pharmacist about all medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter products.

Medicines that **should not** be taken with capecitabine include sorivudine and similar medicines like brivudine.

There are some medicines that may be still taken with capecitabine but may require close supervision by your doctor.

These include:

- Warfarin (Coumadin®, Marevan®), a medicine used to thin the blood.
- Phenytoin (Dilantin®), a medicine used in epilepsy and in heart irregularities.
- Leucovorin, also called folic acid, a medicine used to treat folic acid deficient anaemia.
- Antacids containing aluminium and/or magnesium hydroxide, medicines used to treat heartburn or indigestion.

Your doctor or pharmacist has more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while taking capecitabine.



How can I receive additional information about cancer therapy?

A While your doctor is your best source for information about your treatment, many people find they want to learn more. Some are especially eager to communicate with others who are facing the same situation. Please ask your nurse if you wish to be put in contact with the Cancer Society NZ – they are a valuable resource for support and information.

DOs

- DO take capecitabine twice daily, every day, after a meal for the days prescribed.
- DO keep track of your therapy in your capecitabine treatment diary.
- DO call your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions about side effects.
- DO bring your capecitabine treatment diary with you each time you visit your doctor's or nurses clinic.
- DO take capecitabine swallowed whole with a glass of water.

DON'Ts

- DON'T try to 'catch up' if you miss a dose of capecitabine.
- DON'T leave capecitabine tablets where children can reach them.
- DON'T ignore side effects! Call your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
- DON'T share capecitabine with anyone.

Dosing

Take capecitabine exactly as your doctor has prescribed.

Your doctor will tell you how many capecitabine tablets to take each day. Your doctor will calculate the dose based on your height and weight.

Your doctor may want you to take a combination of 150mg and 500mg tablets for each dose.

If a combination of tablets is prescribed, it is very important that you correctly identify the tablets.

Your doctor may vary your dose depending on the nature of your illness and your response to capecitabine.

Treatment Diary

Please do use your diary every day. It helps your medical team to see where in the cycle you have experienced side effects. Each time you take your dose of capecitabine, circle the top 'AM' for your morning dose, and circle the bottom 'PM' for the evening dose.

It may be helpful to note down the number of tablets of 150mg and 500mg strengths that you took each day. **During your 7-day rest period, you will not need to record any dosing.**

If your doctor has told you to withhold your dose of capecitabine, write a 'W'.

Your doctor may have prescribed continuous capecitabine for you. If so you will not have a 7-day rest period.

CAUTION about possible side effects...

Contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice immediately if you have any of these symptoms or if you are unsure of your symptoms. Tell them you are taking capecitabine.



Moderate diarrhoea
(An increase in loose motions
3-4 times over and above what
is normal for you)



Diarrhoea at night



High temperature
38c or higher



Moderate pain and redness of the mouth, swelling of the mouth or mouth sores



"moderate pain, swelling, redness,
blistering of hands and/or feet"



Chest Pain

Capecitabine treatment diary



Side effects

Record any side effects you have by writing the code letter for that side effect in your diary. If the side effect is bad enough to stop you taking capecitabine, draw a circle around the letter. If you have side effects that are not described in this brochure, write them down. Call your doctor, pharmacist or nurse to let them know about the side effects. Finally, if you have no side effects, record this fact as well.

Here are the code letters to use:

D = diarrhoea

N = nausea

V= vomiting

H = hand-foot syndrome

MU =mouth ulcers

F = fever

0 = other side effects (write them in the box)

R = rest

FG = felt good

**W = withheld Capecitabine of because of
side effects**

Treatment Diary Notes

Key

N = nausea	F = fever	D = diarrhoea	R = rest day
MU = mouth ulcers	H = hand foot syndrome	FG = felt good	
V = vomiting	O = other side effects	W = withheld capecitabine	

Treatment Diary Notes

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Treatment Diary Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.

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Treatment Diary Notes

A series of 25 horizontal dotted lines for handwritten notes.

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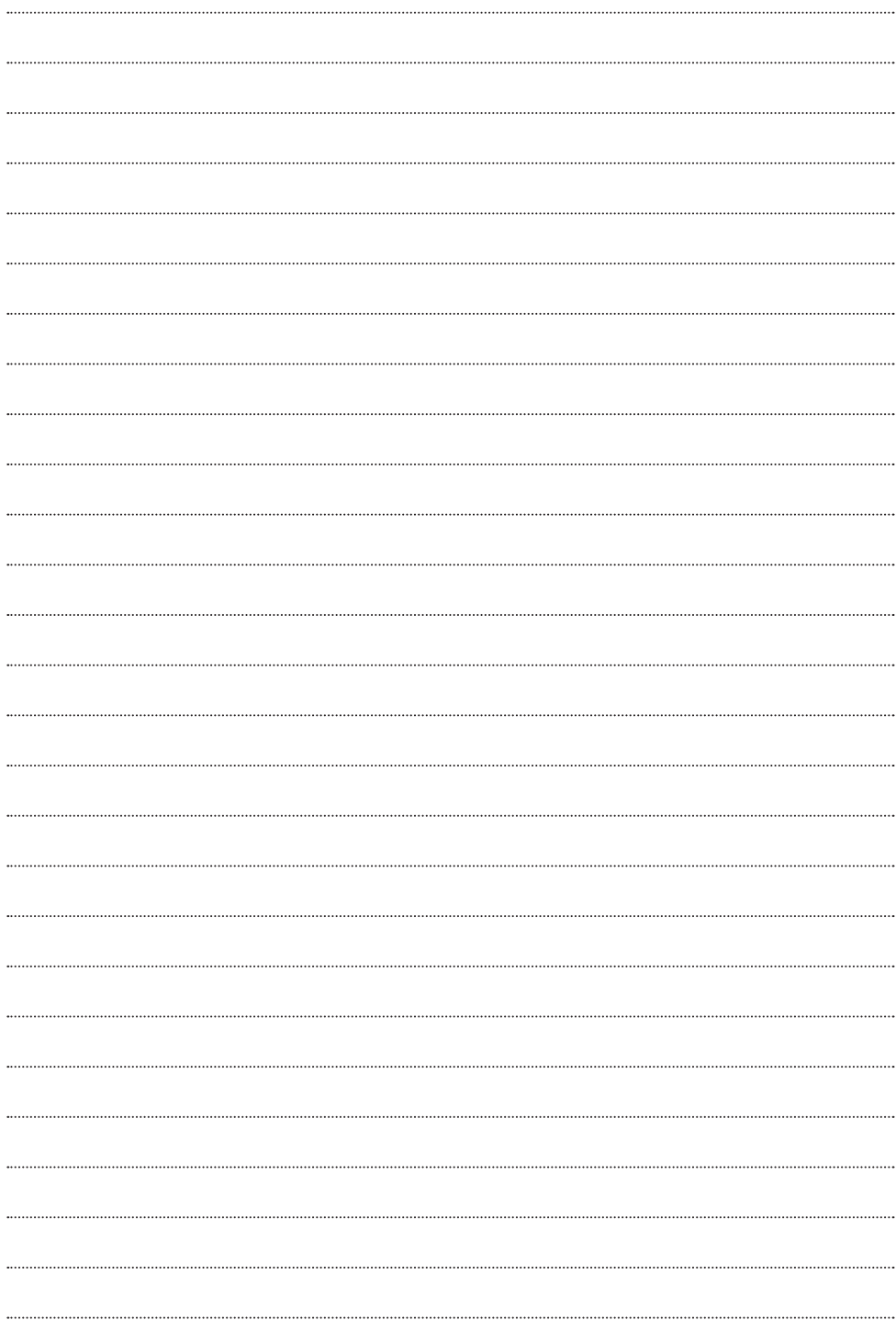
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**For further information please contact the Medical Oncology Service at
Hawke's Bay District Health Board on 06 878 8109 or 0800 464 655**



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Hawke's Bay District Health Board supports and encourages
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