



Oral etoposide for children and young people

An information guide for patients, parents and carers

The purpose of this guide is to give information on the use of oral etoposide in children and young people with cancer.

Please read this guide carefully alongside any patient information provided by the manufacturer. We have written this guide to give you more information about the use of this medicine in children and young people. Keep it somewhere safe so you can read it again.

What is etoposide?

Etoposide is a chemotherapy medicine commonly used in the treatment of certain types of cancer and leukaemia.

What preparations of etoposide are available?

Etoposide is available as 50mg and 100mg capsules. A liquid medication may be available at some hospitals

Where can I get etoposide from?

Etoposide must only be obtained from the hospital at which you/your child is being treated. Please remember to bring all medication with you at each hospital visit.

How is etoposide given?

Etoposide is given by mouth, once or twice a day. It must not be given with food. Give at least 1 hour before food or 2 hours after food. Instructions will be on the label or on the patient dosing information chart.

The capsules should be swallowed whole with plenty of water. Do not break, crush or chew the capsules. The liquid medicine comes in small single dose glass bottles

or single dose syringes from the pharmacy. If you/your child is unable to swallow the stoposide capsules, follow the instructions below for etoposide liquid.

How to give oral etoposide liquid

For each dose you will need:

- a pair of non-sterile, disposable gloves
- a cytotoxic sharps bin, available from your hospital or shared care centre
- glass bottle containing the etoposide
- oral syringe (if needed)

If the etoposide has been supplied in a glass bottle that is bigger than 20mls, follow the method below

If drinking the dose of etoposide straight from the glass bottle:

- put on the gloves
- pour a soft drink (e.g., orange juice or diluted ribena) into the glass bottle containing the etoposide – this should be a suitable volume to drink completely, approximately 20-30mls
- drink the entire contents of the glass bottle containing the soft drink and etoposide

- add some more soft drink to the glass bottle
- replace the cap and swirl around to ensure the full dose of etoposide is mixed with the drink
- drink the entire contents of the bottle
- repeat if necessary to ensure the full dose is given
- ensure all the soft drink containing the etoposide is given and no liquid is left in the glass bottle

If giving the dose of etoposide using an oral syringe:

- put on the gloves
- pour a soft drink (e.g., orange juice or diluted ribena) into the glass bottle containing the etoposide – this should be a suitable volume to draw up into the oral syringe, approximately 10mls
- draw up the entire contents of the bottle containing the soft drink and etoposide into the oral syringe
- place the syringe into the back of the mouth and slowly push the plunger
- add some more soft drink to the glass bottle
- replace the cap and swirl around to ensure the full dose of etoposide is mixed with the drink
- draw up the entire contents of the bottle containing the soft drink and etoposide into the oral syringe and give as outlined previously
- repeat if necessary to ensure the full dose is given
- ensure all the soft drink containing the etoposide is given and no liquid is left in the glass bottle

If the etoposide has been supplied in a small glass bottle that is less than 20mls in size, please follow the instructions below:

- put on the gloves
- empty the contents of the etoposide bottle into the glass (not plastic) beaker
- pour a soft drink (e.g. orange juice or diluted Ribena) into the glass bottle containing the etoposide
- swirl around and pour the washings into the glass
- either drink the entire contents of the glass or draw the contents of the glass into an oral syringe
- if using an oral syringe, place the syringe into the back of the mouth and slowly push the plunger
- ensure all the soft drink containing the etoposide is given and no liquid is left in the glass bottle or glass
- wash the glass separately in warm soapy water and keep for the next dose, do not use for any other purpose

For all methods of administration:

Wrap all utensils (such as the glass bottle, gloves, oral syringe) in the kitchen towel, seal in a plastic bag and

place in the cytotoxic sharps bin. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.

When not in use, the cytotoxic sharps bin must be closed (but not sealed) and stored out of reach of children.

When each course is finished, or the cytotoxic sharps bin is two thirds full, the sharps bin should be sealed. At the next hospital visit please return the sharps bin to your hospital or shared care centre.

Are there any possible side effects?

It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to chemotherapy. Some will have very few side effects whilst others will have more.

The side effects listed below will not affect everyone who is given etoposide and may be different if more than one chemotherapy drug is given.

What are the common side effects?

Nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting (being sick)

If this occurs it is usually mild. Anti-sickness medicines can be given to reduce or prevent these symptoms. Please contact your team if sickness is not controlled.

Reduced bone marrow function

Blood counts will be checked regularly to see how the bone marrow is working. A low neutrophil count can make you/your child more at risk of infection. A low haemoglobin count indicates anaemia which may make you/your child unusually tired and a low platelet count may cause bruising or bleeding.

Please contact your hospital team if there are signs of any infection, especially a high temperature or signs of unusual tiredness, bruising or bleeding.

Hair loss

Some or all of your/your child's hair may fall out, including eyebrows and eyelashes. This is temporary and hair will grow back when treatment has finished.

What are the less common side effects?

Mouth ulcers

If your/your child's mouth becomes sore or small ulcers develop, contact your team for advice. Always follow the advice from your hospital on good mouth care before and during treatment.

Allergic reaction

Sometimes allergic reactions occur with etoposide. This reaction may be mild to severe. Signs of a mild reaction include skin rashes and itching, shivering, redness of the face, high temperature, sore mouth or tongue, dizziness or headache. If any of these occur contact your hospital.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction include any of the above, as well as difficulty in breathing or chest pain. If you experience signs of a severe allergic reaction, call an ambulance immediately.

Is there anything else I should know about or do?

Contact the hospital at which you/your child is being treated if:

- a dose of etoposide is forgotten
- vomiting occurs after taking the dose
- too much etoposide is given

Which tests/investigations may take place before, during or after treatment with etoposide?

Full blood count

A full blood count will be done regularly at your hospital or by your community team. The dose of etoposide may need to be adjusted according to the result. The new dose will be recorded on the label or on the patient dosing information chart.

Does etoposide interact with any other medicines?

Some medicines can affect how well etoposide works. Always tell the prescriber about any other medication that is being taken. Make sure and check with the doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines including supplements, herbal and complementary medicines.

How should the medicine be handled and stored?

- keep out of reach and sight of children
- store the tablets at room temperature
- store liquid at room temperature

- keep out of direct sunlight
- handle as little as possible and always wear gloves
- if you are pregnant or think you could be pregnant, please discuss handling instructions with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist
- always handle medicines with care

Any etoposide that has not been given, or is out of date, must be returned to the hospital at which you/your child is being treated. **Do not throw away at home.**

Please read the CCLG factsheet – safe handling of chemotherapy medicines

Pregnancy

If you are sexually active while taking anti-cancer medicines or drugs, it is important that you use contraception such as, condoms, the pill or coil to avoid pregnancy. You may need to take a pregnancy test to confirm you are not pregnant before taking this medicine. Contraception should continue for a while after treatment finishes. Your team will advise how long you should continue contraception for.

Fertility

Depending on the type, dose and combination of medicines given during your treatment, it is possible that fertility may be affected. For girls, this means that it may be harder for them to become pregnant in the future. For boys, this may mean that their sperm is less fertile which can affect their chance of having children in the future.

If you would like more information about this please discuss with your /your child's medical team.

If you have any questions about etoposide, please contact the hospital at which you/your child is being treated. This guide only gives general information

Always discuss individual treatment with your/your child's medical team. Do not rely on this guide alone for information about treatment.

i USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG)

publishes a variety of free resources to order or download
www.cclg.org.uk

Young Lives vs Cancer offers practical support to children and young people with cancer and to their families
www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support offers support and advice to those affected by cancer.
www.macmillan.org.uk

EMC (Electronic Medicines Compendium) offers up to date, approved and regulated information for licensed medicines.
www.medicines.org.uk



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Cancer and
Leukaemia
Group

the EXPERTS
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Registered charity in England and Wales (1182637)
and Scotland (SC049948).

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This edition: January 2023
Next review date: January 2026



Patient Information Forum

With thanks to Ghazala Javid, Senior Paediatric Oncology & Haematology Pharmacist, University Hospitals of Leicester and the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG) paediatric oncology pharmacists steering committee who reviewed this factsheet on behalf of the CCLG Information Advisory Group, comprising multi-professional experts in the field of children's cancer.

Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) is a leading national charity and expert voice for all childhood cancers.

Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed with cancer. Our network of dedicated professional members work together in treatment, care and research to help shape a future where all children with cancer survive and live happy, healthy and independent lives.

We fund and support innovative world-class research and collaborate, both nationally and internationally, to drive forward improvements in childhood cancer. Our award-winning information resources help lessen the anxiety, stress and loneliness commonly felt by families, giving support throughout the cancer journey.

Our work is funded by donations. If you would like to help, text 'CCLG' to 70085 to donate £3. You may be charged for one text message at your network's standard or charity rate. CCLG (registered charity numbers 1182637 and SC049948) will receive 100% of your donation.

We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this publication. We make every effort to ensure that this information is accurate and up to date at the time of printing. CCLG does not accept any responsibility for information provided by third parties including those referred to or signposted to in this publication. Information in this publication should be used to supplement appropriate professional or other advice specific to your circumstances.

If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us at publications@cclg.org.uk. CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.