



Oral procarbazine 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 procarbazine 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 procarbazine?

Procarbazine is a chemotherapy medicine commonly used in the treatment of certain types of cancer.

What preparations of procarbazine are available?

Procarbazine is available as 50mg capsules. At some hospitals, a liquid preparation can be made by the pharmacy. The pharmacy team can tell you if this is available.

Where can I get procarbazine from?

You must only get procarbazine from your treating hospital. Please remember to bring all medication with you, to each hospital visit.

How is procarbazine given?

Procarbazine is given by mouth. Instructions will be on the label or on the patient dosing information chart and these will be explained fully by the pharmacy team member or the nurse who gives the medication to you.

The capsule(s) should be swallowed whole with plenty of water or juice, including fruit squash. Do not break, crush or chew the capsules.

Liquid medicine should be measured into an oral syringe through a bung/stopper in the neck of the bottle. The hospital pharmacy will supply the bung/stopper with the medicine. Your hospital team will explain how to measure liquid medicine using a syringe and how to dispose of the syringe after use.

Are there any possible side effects?

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

The side effects listed will not affect everyone who is given procarbazine 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)

Anti-sickness medicines can be given to reduce or prevent these symptoms. Please contact your hospital team if sickness is not controlled.

Loss of appetite

It is possible to 'go off food' and eating while having treatment. Your hospital team will be able to offer advice on how to manage loss of appetite.

Reduced bone marrow function

Blood counts will be checked regularly to see how the bone marrow is working. A low neutrophil count can increase your/your child's risk of infection. A low haemoglobin count indicates anaemia which may cause unusual tiredness and a low platelet count may cause bruising or bleeding.

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

What are the less common side effects?

Skin rashes

If a skin rash appears, contact your hospital team. They will advise on the appropriate treatment to use.

Flu-like symptoms

Headaches and tiredness, aching joints and muscles, a high temperature and chills may develop. Please contact your hospital team for advice.

Food reactions

While taking procarbazine, eating certain foods may cause an unpleasant reaction. There is a small risk of flushing or an increase in blood pressure. This can happen for two to four weeks after finishing the course.

The main foods, drinks and medicines that could cause a reaction include: mature cheeses, yeast or meat extracts, (like Marmite, Oxo and Bovril), salami, pepperoni sausage, broadbean pods, overripe fruit, foods which are not fresh, particularly if they have been fermented, pickled, smoked, 'hung' or 'matured'.

Avoid cough or cold medicines or nasal sprays and discuss with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines.

These reactions are extremely rare so, if a food is particularly wanted, try a small amount first until it is clear that it does not cause illness. Alcohol must be avoided.

Other cancers

If procarbazine is given for a long time, there is a small risk of developing another cancer after many years. If you would like more information, please discuss this with your consultant.

Is there anything else I should know about or do?

Contact your treating hospital if:

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

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

Full blood count

A full blood count will be done regularly at your hospital, shared care centre or by your community team. The dose of procarbazine 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 procarbazine interact with any other medicines?

Some medicines can affect how well procarbazine works. Always tell the doctor about any other medication being taken. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines. This includes supplements and herbal or complementary medicines.

How should the medicine be handled and stored?

- always handle medicines with care
- keep out of reach and sight of children
- store the capsules at room temperature
- store liquid according to the label and advice from your hospital (may be in the fridge)
- keep out of direct sunlight
- handle as little as possible and always wear gloves
- if you are pregnant or think you could be pregnant, discuss handling instructions with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

Any procarbazine that has not been given, or is out of date, must be returned to your treating hospital. **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 to 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 using contraception.

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 medical team.

If you have any questions about procarbazine, please contact your treating hospital. This guide only gives general information.

Always discuss individual treatment with your 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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