

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Mercaptopurine Tablet



What is Mercaptopurine?

- Mercaptopurine is used for treatment or maintenance therapy in acute leukemia.

How is Mercaptopurine Administered/Taken?

- Mercaptopurine is usually taken orally once daily, at the same time, on an empty stomach. Milk products will affect the absorption of Mercaptopurine. Avoid milk or milk products one hour before and two hours after taking Mercaptopurine.
- The tablet should be swallowed whole. Do not chew or crush the tablet. Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you have difficulty swallowing.
- If possible, handle the medication yourself. If you need a family member or caregiver to give the medication, ensure that they wash their hands before and after handling the medication.
- If you miss or vomit a dose of Mercaptopurine, skip the missed dose and take it at the next scheduled timing.

Can Mercaptopurine be Administered/Taken with Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicines or supplements.

What are the Important Side Effects of Mercaptopurine?

- Medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition even though they may result in some inevitable side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Risk of infection can occur as Mercaptopurine can reduce the number of white blood cells in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce risk of infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wash your hands after toileting. - Avoid crowds and people who are sick. - Avoid raw food. • Please proceed to the A&E department immediately if you experience signs of infection such as fever with a

Side Effect	Management
	temperature of 38°C and above, chills and shivering. Avoid taking Paracetamol (Panadol®) to relieve fever. Be aware that taking Paracetamol may mask fever and hence delay treatment of infection.
Bruising or bleeding can occur as Mercaptopurine can reduce the number of platelets in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce risk of bleeding problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not pick your nose. - Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush. - Be aware that bleeding may take a longer time to stop. Please proceed to the A&E department immediately if you experience any severe or persistent bleeding (e.g. passing a large amount of fresh blood in urine or stools, or passing black sticky stools) or significant bruising.
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take small, frequent meals. Avoid smells that precipitate nausea. Take medicines for nausea or vomiting prescribed by your doctor. Avoid tight-fitting clothes around the waist.
Diarrhoea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your doctor if this is severe and/or does not improve with medicine use. Drink at least two litres (8 cups) of fluids every day when you are having diarrhoea. Avoid milk, dairy products, high fibre food or spicy food while you are having diarrhoea.

Side Effect	Management
Mouth ulcers can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat and this can lead to an infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a soft toothbrush. Rinse and brush your dentures after eating and soak them in denture solution overnight. Rinsing your mouth regularly with an alcohol-free mouth gargle or salt water may help reduce chances of infection.
Fatigue or tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not drive or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. Inform your doctor if fatigue is persistent or worsens.
Changes in the way the liver works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please proceed to the A&E department immediately if you experience any yellowing of eye white and skin or tea-coloured urine, pale stools or severe abdominal pain.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- You must not become pregnant during treatment with Mercaptopurine and must use an effective method of contraception. You should take appropriate contraceptive measures during and up to six months after stopping treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- Mercaptopurine may have an anti-fertility effect, which could be irreversible. You should discuss with your doctor regarding fertility preservation prior to starting treatment.
- You should not breast-feed during treatment.

What Else Can I Do to Help My Condition?

- Exercise
Light exercise is recommended as it helps to improve mobility, balance and even emotional well-being. Do avoid strenuous exercise, and rest when you are feeling tired.
- Stay positive
Understand your condition and take an active role in managing it. Do not be afraid to talk about it with your doctor/ pharmacist/ family members. Repressed feelings can be harmful to your immediate well-being and long-term health.
- Adequate hydration
Maintain adequate hydration with two to three litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids. This will decrease your chances of being constipated and also prevent dehydration.
- Medical and dental treatment
If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always inform the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy. Talk to your cancer doctor if you think you need dental treatment. Always inform your dentist that you are having chemotherapy.

How Do I Store Mercaptopurine?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>

