

## Topotecan (Hycamtin®)

### How does this medicine work?

Topotecan (toh-poh-tee-kan) is a chemotherapy medicine that destroys cancer cells by interfering with a specific phase of cell life.

### How is it given?

It is given into the vein (IV) in the hospital or clinic. Sometimes it is given intrathecally (into the spinal fluid).

### What are the side effects?

For patients receiving IV topotecan:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Common     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• low blood counts</li><li>• fatigue</li><li>• mild nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea</li></ul>  |
| Occasional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hair loss</li><li>• mouth sores</li><li>• rash</li><li>• fever and flu-like symptoms</li><li>• headaches</li><li>• low blood pressure</li><li>• shortness of breath</li></ul>   |
| Rare       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• abdominal (belly) pain</li><li>• kidney or liver problems</li><li>• signs of allergic reaction:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- fever or chills</li><li>- rash or hives</li><li>- wheezing</li><li>- trouble breathing</li></ul></li></ul> |

For patients receiving intrathecal topotecan:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Occasional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• nausea and vomiting</li><li>• fever</li><li>• headaches</li></ul>   |
| Rare       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• seizures</li><li>• paralysis</li><li>• changes in the brain tissue seen on MRIs, which may indicate learning disabilities</li></ul> |

### When should I call the doctor?

- fever, chills
- coughing
- wheezing
- shortness of breath
- bleeding or unusual bruising
- severe fatigue
- mouth sores
- skin rash or irritation
- continued vomiting or diarrhea
- severe headache
- trouble breathing - **call 911**

### What else do I need to know?

All caregivers should wear gloves when handling urine, stool, and vomit while your child is receiving the chemotherapy and for 48 hours afterward. Urine, stool, and vomit can be safely disposed of in septic tanks and the sewer system.

Any clothing or bed linens that are contaminated with urine, stool, or vomit should be washed separately from other laundry in hot water and detergent. Anyone handling the contaminated laundry should wear gloves.

Blood samples may be needed to check the effects of the medicine. Blood counts are lowest at 1 to 2 weeks after the medicine is given. Kidney and liver function tests are also done.

Good mouth care will help prevent mouth sores.

You and your child should know the names of all the medicines he or she is taking.

**Share this information** with anyone involved in your child's care.

Check with the doctor, nurse practitioner, or pharmacist before giving **any** other prescription or non-prescription medicines, herbs, or vitamins.

## Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the oncology clinic or pharmacy.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: [www.childrensmn.org](http://www.childrensmn.org).

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota  
Patient/Family Education  
2525 Chicago Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
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