

## Fludarabine (Fludara®)

### How does this medicine work?

Fludarabine (flew-**dare**-a-bean) interferes with the cells' ability to make DNA. This prevents cancer cells from multiplying.

### How is it given?

Fludarabine is given by infusion into the vein (IV) in the hospital or clinic.

### Are there any precautions about food or other medicines?

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

### What are the side effects?

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Common     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• low blood cell counts</li><li>• nausea, vomiting</li><li>• changes blood electrolytes</li><li>• fever</li></ul>   |
| Occasional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• chills</li><li>• extreme tiredness</li><li>• diarrhea</li><li>• mouth sores</li><li>• nerve tissue damage</li><li>• numbness</li><li>• blurred vision</li><li>• eye sensitivity to bright light</li><li>• joint pain</li><li>• weakness</li><li>• seizures</li><li>• changes in immune system</li></ul> |

Rare

- increased salts in the blood due to tumor cell destruction with first course of chemotherapy
- rash
- liver injury
- kidney injury
- lung damage, including shortness of breath, coughing, and pneumonia
- worsening of nervous system problems, which can lead to:
  - blindness
  - paralysis
  - confusion and coma
  - muscle weakness
- thinning of nerve fibers, which can lead to:
  - loss of memory and concentration
  - loss of balance and ability to walk

### When should I call the doctor?

- fever or chills
- coughing or shortness of breath
- bleeding or unusual bruising
- sleepiness or severe fatigue
- mouth sores
- skin rash or irritation
- continued vomiting or diarrhea
- seizures
- signs of allergic reaction:
  - rash or hives
  - wheezing
  - 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 fludarabine. Blood counts are lowest at 12 to 21 days after the medicine is given.

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.

## 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  
4/09 ©Copyright