

Mercaptopurine (Purinethol)

Here is important information on how to use, handle, and store your medicine, what side effects to look for and how to manage them.

What it looks like: Round, pale yellow, scored tablet

How to handle and store:

- **There are special safe handling instructions for this medicine.** Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about the precautions you need to follow when you take this medicine at home.
- Store in a closed container at room temperature in a dry place such as a cabinet away from light, heat and moisture.
- **Do not** store in your bathroom or refrigerator.
- Keep this medicine away from children and **do not** share it with anyone.

How to take:

- **Do not** take more tablets than ordered by your doctor.
- Swallow tablets whole with a full glass of water at the same time each day.
- **Do not** take this medicine with food. Take this medicine 1 hour before or 2 hours after you eat.
- **Do not** crush, break or chew the tablets.
- If you miss a dose, wait until it is time for your next dose. Skip the missed dose. **Do not double up on doses.**
- Use a calendar or diary to keep track of what days and what times you take this medicine.
- Your doctor may change your dose or adjust your dose based on laboratory results.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Disposal:

- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how to get rid of prescription medicines safely.

Precautions:

- Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal products.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any of the following medicines:
 - Warfarin (Coumadin)
 - Aspirin
 - Allopurinol (Zyloprim)
 - Sulfasalazine (Azulfidine)
 - Mesalamine (Asacol, Pentasa)
 - Olsalazine (Dipentum)
- **Do not get pregnant or breastfeed** while on this medicine. Talk with your doctor about what birth control to use.
- Your doctor may order blood tests to check how well this medicine works in your body. Your doctor may change the dose of your medicine based on your bloodwork.

Possible Side Effects

You can find more information on side effects in the Patient Education booklet, *Treatment with Chemotherapy and Anti-Cancer Medicines*.

Low White Blood Cells/Preventing Infection

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you have a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher, sore throat, chills or other signs of infection.
- Wash your hands often.
- It is important to keep your appointments to have your blood work checked.

Fatigue

What this means: Fatigue can be due to many factors, including low blood counts, sleep changes, stress, not eating well and pain.

What to do:

- Be active, but plan times to rest.
- Get enough sleep.
- Drink plenty of water and eat small meals or snacks often during the day.
- Call your doctor if you are too tired to get out of bed for 24 hours, feel confused or are unable to think clearly.

Bleeding/Bruising/Black Stools

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you have bruising, bleeding, black stools or sudden or severe stomach pain.
- **Do not** use aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve) for regular aches and pains unless your doctor says it is okay.

Nausea and Vomiting

What to do:

- Eat small meals or snacks often during the day. Stay away from spicy or high-fat foods.
- Drink water during the day.
- Call your doctor right away if you are unable to keep liquids down for more than 24 hours or if you feel lightheaded or dizzy.
- Take your anti-nausea medicine as ordered by your doctor.

Liver Problems

What this means: Your doctor will order blood tests to check how well your liver works when you take this medicine. **Do not** drink alcohol. Alcohol will make your symptoms worse.

What to do:

Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Dark colored urine
- The whites of your eyes or your skin turn yellow
- Pain on the right side of your stomach

Mercaptopurine (Purinethol)

Skin Changes (Rash/Color)

What this means: You may get a rash or darkening of your skin and nails.

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you develop a rash.
- Protect your skin from sunlight. Wear clothes to cover your skin and use sunscreen (at least SPF 30)
- **Do not** use strong detergents or soaps on your rash.

This is not a complete list of all possible side effects. Tell your doctor if you have these or any other side effects that you think are caused by this medicine. Your James health care team can give you other tips for how to manage your side effects.