

Managing Side Effects of VEGF Receptor Blockers

A Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF) receptor blocker is a type of “targeted therapy”. This medicine is used to help block the growth and spread of cancer. It cuts off the supply of blood and nutrients to cancer cells. This stops the growth of new cancer cells. When you take this medicine it is important to tell your doctor about any other medicines you take. You should also tell your doctor if you are scheduled to have a medical or dental procedure.

What are the common side effects of this medicine?

Every person responds differently to treatment. The most common side effects are: skin rash, hand/foot skin reactions, mouth sores, diarrhea, high blood pressure, increased risk of bleeding, bruising and/or blood clots.

How do I manage side effects?

- **Skin Rash/Hand-foot Skin Reactions**

A rash can appear within 3 to 4 weeks. The rash may be worse at first, and then lessen over time.

- ▶ Hand-foot reactions may include tenderness, redness, skin cracks, blisters, and callus formation on the palms of your hands, fingertips, bottom of your feet and toes.
- ▶ Your skin symptoms may be controlled with over-the-counter creams or lotions. At times you may need a prescription from your doctor for medicines.
- ▶ Keep your skin moisturized. Use creams or lotions on all areas where your rash or skin changes are found, including your scalp, hands and feet.

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

- ▶ Talk to your doctor about special creams and lotions with urea or ammonium lactate to help control dry, callused or cracked skin.
 - ▶ Do not use over the counter products on your skin that contain alcohol.
 - ▶ See the patient education handout [Hand Foot Syndrome During Cancer Therapy](#).
 - ▶ Take short lukewarm showers. Try to not take more than one shower each day. To help keep your skin moist, use body creams or lotions while your skin is still damp.
 - ▶ Wear comfortable loose-fitting clothes and well-fitting shoes. Cotton fabrics for clothing is the best.
 - ▶ Being in the sun may cause your rash to get worse. Use a hypoallergenic sunscreen with a **SPF 30 or higher** before going outdoors, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours. Be sure to put sunscreen on again after being in the water or after you sweat. Wear a hat and shirt with long sleeves when outside during the day. Avoid other sources of heat such as saunas and hot tubs.
- **Mouth Sores**
 - ▶ Mouth sores may be small ulcers or areas of redness. Sometimes areas in your mouth feel painful but you cannot see a sore in that area.
 - ▶ Regular mouth care is important. Keep your mouth and teeth clean. Do not use a mouth rinse that includes alcohol.
 - ▶ Check your mouth each day for bleeding or sores.
 - ▶ Drink plenty of fluids and eat soft, moist foods.
 - ▶ Do not eat foods that may hurt your mouth such as hard, acidic, salty or dry foods.
 - ▶ See the patient education handout [Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects – Mouth Sores](#).
 - **Diarrhea**
 - ▶ Drink plenty of clear fluids to prevent dehydration. Do not drink fluids that include caffeine.
 - ▶ Eat bland foods that are low in fiber. Do not eat spicy, greasy or fried foods.
 - ▶ See the patient education handout [Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects – Diarrhea](#).

- **High Blood Pressure**

- ▶ Keep track of your blood pressure every day when you take this medicine. Use a blood pressure log to write down each blood pressure reading. Bring this log to your clinic visit.
- ▶ Always **recheck** your blood pressure if you get a reading that is higher or lower than normal. Wait at least one minute between blood pressure checks.

- **How to take your Blood Pressure:**

- ▶ Sit in a comfortable position for 5 minutes before taking your blood pressure.
- ▶ Push your sleeve up and lay your arm on a table with your palm up. If your clothes are too tight around your arm, take your shirt or blouse off before checking your blood pressure.
- ▶ Wrap the cuff around your upper arm just above the elbow. Make sure the lower end of the cuff is about one inch above your elbow. The cuff should be snug around your arm.
- ▶ Record your blood pressure reading on the blood pressure log.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Diarrhea (4 loose stools more than your normal in 24 hours)
- Nausea and vomiting that prevents you from eating or drinking
- Open sores in your mouth or problems with mouth pain that may make eating or drinking difficult
- Swelling in your hands, feet, or ankles
- Skin changes on your hands or feet that are painful. Call if you have any skin blisters or itchy rash.
- New or worsening feeling of being weak or tired
- New bruising or bleeding easily
- A blood pressure reading that is higher than normal
 - ▶ Call your provider if your top number is higher than 150 or your bottom number is higher than 100 at two checks that are 15 minutes apart.
 - ▶ Call if the top number is less than 100
 - ▶ Call if you are feeling dizzy and light-headed

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- Sudden chest pain, shortness of breath or changes in heartbeat
- Severe headache, confusion, change in speech, change in vision, weakness or numbness
- Bleeding that does not stop or is very heavy
- Blood in vomit, vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Bowel movements that are red or black like tar