

## 5-Fluorouracil (5FU) and Leucovorin Adrucil®

5-fluorouracil is a cancer-fighting medicine that interferes with the growth of cancer cells. It is given as an intravenous injection (into a vein). Leucovorin increases the effects of 5-fluorouracil. It is also given as an intravenous injection (into a vein). They are used to treat colon, rectal, breast, pancreas and stomach cancers.

### Special Instructions

Before you take this medication, tell your doctor if:

- You are pregnant or think you are pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding
- You have any type of infection (bacterial, viral or fungal), or any form of heart, liver, lung or kidney disease
- You have any type of bleeding problem or disorder
- You have ever had an unusual reaction to a medication

Tell your doctor about any medications you are taking, including non-prescription medicines (over-the-counter), nutritional supplements, vitamins, minerals or herbal products.

Talk to your doctor before getting any vaccines (such as flu shots).

Talk with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about what birth control measures to take while taking this medicine. 5-fluorouracil may cause birth defects or miscarriage if taken during pregnancy. If you are not having your period or if you are having symptoms of menopause, you may still become pregnant.

The frequency of side effects may be different depending on how the drug is given.

### Side Effects

- Nausea, vomiting, and/or appetite loss
  - Ask your doctor about medicines to relieve nausea.
  - Tell your doctor or nurse **immediately** if you experience severe nausea or vomiting and cannot keep food or water in your stomach.
  - Drink 8 to 12 eight-ounce glasses (2 to 3 liters) of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids each day to avoid becoming dehydrated.

- Eat when you are hungry. Try eating several small meals or snacks throughout the day. Small meals are easier to handle than large meals and will help you get the nutrients your body needs.
- For more information, please ask for a copy of “Keeping Nausea Under Control.” For additional help in coping with nausea and/or appetite and weight loss, ask your doctor to make an appointment with a dietitian for you.
- Mouth ulcers
  - You may develop mouth ulcers, a sore mouth, and/or sore gums during treatment. Begin good mouth care right away.
  - **Do not** wait for ulcers to develop. Use a soft toothbrush or Toothettes® (disposable mouth swabs) to clean your teeth. Rinse your mouth 4 times a day with a baking soda solution.
  - Do not use commercial mouthwash; it contains alcohol and may irritate your mouth. Tell your doctor if you develop any mouth or throat ulcers. For more information, please ask for a copy of “Mouth Care for Chemotherapy Patients.”
- Diarrhea
  - If you **do not** have a fever, you may take loperamide (Imodium®), available without a prescription, to control diarrhea. **Do not** take any other medicine for your diarrhea (such as Kaopectate® or Pepto-Bismol®) without your doctor's approval because these medications can mask a fever and/or affect your platelet function.
  - Tell your doctor if you have diarrhea during or after your treatment.
  - Drink 8 to 12 eight-ounce glasses (2 to 3 liters) of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids each day to avoid becoming dehydrated.
  - If you experience severe diarrhea while taking this medicine at home (more than 4 loose bowel movements in one day or diarrhea at night), call your doctor or nurse. If it is after regular clinic hours, go to the nearest emergency room.
- Watering, reddening, and itching of the eyes
  - You can use non-prescription artificial tears to soothe your eyes. Tell your doctor or nurse if watering, reddening, and itching of the eyes becomes severe.
- Skin rash, itching
  - Chemotherapy or premedication may give you a rash. Tell your doctor or nurse about any rash, blisters, itching, redness or peeling of your skin. Ask your doctor about medicines to relieve itching.
  - Over-the-counter antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (e.g., Benadryl®) may help to relieve the itching. A bath with mild soap, such as Dove®, Tone®, Basis®, Lubriderm Body Bar®, Lowila®, Oilatum®, or Emulave®, may be soothing.
- Hand-foot syndrome
  - Hand-foot syndrome causes pain, swelling, redness, or tingling on the palms of your hands and/or the soles of your feet. You may also have dry or itchy skin or a rash.
  - This is temporary. Ask your doctor about medicines to treat these symptoms. A bath with mild soap, such as Dove®, Tone®, Basis®, Lubriderm Body Bar®, Lowila®, Oilatum®, or Emulave®, may be soothing.

- Use creams or lotions such as Eucerin<sup>®</sup>, Lubriderm<sup>®</sup>, Vanicream<sup>®</sup>, Aquacare<sup>®</sup>, Complex 15 Hand and Body<sup>®</sup>, or Aquaphor<sup>®</sup> to keep your skin moisturized. Avoid heavily scented or perfumed lotions because they often irritate and dry the skin.
- If you experience hand-foot syndrome while receiving chemotherapy at home, stop the chemotherapy and call your doctor or nurse **immediately**.
- Low white blood cell count
  - A low white blood cell count usually develops 7-10 days after therapy begins.
  - Your chance of getting an infection may increase. Avoid contact with persons who have colds, flu, shingles, chicken pox, or any type of infection. Bathe daily and practice good mouth care. For more information, please ask for a copy of “Mouth Care for Chemotherapy Patients.”
  - **Do not** use suppositories or enemas if your white blood cell count is low because they may cause an infection.
  - Tell your doctor or nurse **immediately** if you have fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher, chills, sore throat and/or cough, lower back or side pain, or painful or difficult urination. If it is after regular clinic hours, go to the nearest emergency room.
- Low red blood cell count
  - You may tire easily or become short of breath. Take naps and rest often. Go to the nearest emergency room **immediately** if you have chest pain, sudden shortness of breath, or increased shortness of breath.
- Low platelet count
  - You may bruise and bleed more easily. Avoid cutting or injuring yourself. If you shave, always use an electric shaver. **Do not** take any aspirin or other pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Advil<sup>®</sup> or Motrin<sup>®</sup>) or Naproxen (Naprosyn<sup>®</sup> or Aleve<sup>®</sup>) unless your doctor says it is okay, because these medications can mask a fever and/or affect your platelet function.
  - **Do not** use suppositories or enemas if your platelet count is low because they may cause bleeding.
  - Tell your doctor or nurse **immediately** if you notice tiny red spots under your skin, bruising, or unusual bleeding (e.g., blood in urine or stools, black tarry stools).
  - Go to the nearest emergency room if you coughed up blood or if you have bleeding that will not stop.
- Changes in fingernails or toenails
  - Your nails may become darker and may develop white streaks or ridges. These temporary changes will take time to grow out.
  - Your nails may also become brittle and dry and lift up from the nail bed. Protect your hands and feet if these changes occur. Wear gloves while working with your hands (e.g., gardening and washing dishes).
  - Your chance of developing infections may increase and you might lose a nail temporarily. Use a nail file rather than clippers to trim your nails. Apply lotion to keep your cuticles soft.
- Hair loss or thinning
  - The hair on your head or on your entire body may thin or fall out. This usually begins 2 to 3 weeks after treatment starts and is temporary.

- Sensitivity to sunlight
  - Sunlight may give you a rash or a burn even if you do not usually burn. **Do not** use sunlamps or tanning beds.
  - When you are outside, use a PABA-free sunscreen (at least SPF 30 or greater), no matter what your skin tone, and wear protective clothing, including a hat or scarf.
- Neurological effects
  - If you take high doses of this medicine you may have neurological effects.
  - Tell your doctor or nurse if you have mood changes, depression, confusion, hallucinations, nervousness, difficulty sleeping, dizziness, drowsiness, clumsiness, difficulty walking or restlessness.
- Changes in heart function
  - This drug may cause chest pain or fast or irregular heartbeats. Your doctor may order periodic heart tests for you to have done.
  - Tell your doctor or nurse immediately if you have: chest pain or pressure, shortness of breath, fast or irregular heartbeats, excessive sweating with chest discomfort, pain extending down your jaw, neck and arm (one or both sides of your body), or unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Birth defects
  - 5-fluorouracil may cause birth defects or miscarriage if taken during pregnancy. Women who are able to bear children should practice effective birth control while taking this medication. Talk with your doctor or nurse about what birth control measures to take. You may still become pregnant even if you have symptoms of menopause.



Tell your doctor or nurse **immediately** if you have:

- Chest pain
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble with balance
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Redness of the soles of your feet or the palms of your hands

*These are the most common side effects; other side effects may occur and should be reported to your doctor. Do not change your dose or schedule unless you are told to do so by your doctor. Please report any problems to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.*