

## Topotecan (Hycamtin)

---

### About This Drug

Topotecan is used to treat cancer. It is given by the vein (IV) or orally (by mouth).

### Possible Side Effects

- Bone marrow suppression. This is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This may raise your risk of infection, make you tired and weak, and raise your risk of bleeding.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)
- Pain in your abdomen
- Neutropenic fever. A type of fever that can develop when you have a very low number of white blood cells which can be life-threatening.
- Infection
- Tiredness and weakness
- Decreased appetite (decreased hunger)
- Pain
- Trouble breathing
- Pneumonia
- Hair loss. Hair loss is often temporary, although with certain medicine, hair loss can sometimes be permanent. Hair loss may happen suddenly or gradually. If you lose hair, you may lose it from your head, face, armpits, pubic area, chest, and/or legs. You may also notice your hair getting thin.

**Note:** Each of the side effects above was reported in 5% or greater of patients treated with topotecan. Side effects may be dependent on whether you are taking topotecan by mouth or IV and may be different depending on your specific cancer diagnosis. Not all possible side effects are included above.

### Warnings and Precautions

- Scarring of the lungs that causes stiffness in the lungs which makes breathing difficult and can be life-threatening.
- Severe bone marrow suppression, which can be life-threatening
- When topotecan is given in combination with cisplatin, there is an increased risk of swelling (inflammation) in the colon in the setting of severely low white blood cells, which raises your risk of

infection, and can be life-threatening, - Symptoms are diarrhea, pain in your abdomen, fever and/or chills.

- (Capsules only) Severe diarrhea, which can be life-threatening
- (IV only) Skin and tissue irritation may involve redness, pain, warmth, or swelling at the IV site if the drug leaks out of the vein and into nearby tissue. Very rarely it may cause local tissue necrosis (tissue death).

**Note:** Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

## Important information

- This drug may be present in the saliva, tears, sweat, urine, stool, vomit, semen, and vaginal secretions. Talk to your doctor and/or your nurse about the necessary precautions to take during this time.
- This drug may impair your ability to drive or use machinery. Use caution and talk your doctor and/or nurse about any precautions you may need to take.
- (Capsules only) It is important that you notify your doctor and/or nurse at the first sign of diarrhea so they can provide you with anti-diarrheal medication and give you further instructions. Notify your doctor and/or nurse if you are taking anti-diarrheal medication and your symptoms have not improved or are worsening.

## How to Take Your Medication

- **For oral only:**
- Swallow the medicine whole with or without food as your doctor tells you to take it. Do not chew, crush or divide the capsules.
- You may need to take both the 1 mg capsule (pink) and the 0.25 mg capsule (yellowish-white) for your dose. It is important that you are able to tell the difference between the two different capsules.
- **Missed dose:** If you vomit or miss a dose, take your next dose at the regular time, and contact your doctor. Do not take 2 doses at the same time and do not double up on the next dose.
- **Handling:** Wash your hands after handling your medicine, your caretakers should not handle your medicine with bare hands and should wear latex gloves.
- If any of the capsules are broken, do not touch them with bare hands. Carefully throw away the capsules and wash your hands after handling.
- If you get any of the content of a broken capsules on your skin or in your eyes, you should wash the area of the skin well with soap and water right away. Wash your eyes with flowing water for at least 15 minutes and call your doctor. Call your doctor if you get a skin reaction.
- **Storage :** Store topotecan capsules in the refrigerator, between 36°F to 46°F (2°C to 8°C). Store in the original container and protect from light.
- **Disposal of unused medicine:** Do not flush any expired and/or unused medicine down the toilet or drain unless you are specifically instructed to do so on the medication label. Some facilities have



take-back programs and/or other options. If you do not have a take-back program in your area, then please discuss with your nurse or your doctor how to dispose of unused medicine.

## Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To decrease the risk of infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- To help decrease the risk of bleeding, use a soft toothbrush. Check with your nurse before using dental floss.
- Be very careful when using knives or tools.
- Use an electric shaver instead of a razor.
- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- If you throw up or have diarrhea, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid).
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- If you have diarrhea, eat low-fiber foods that are high in protein and calories and avoid foods that can irritate your digestive tracts or lead to cramping.
- Ask your nurse or doctor about medicine that can lessen or stop your diarrhea.
- To help with decreased appetite, eat small, frequent meals. Eat foods high in calories and protein, such as meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, tofu, eggs, nuts, milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, pudding, and nutritional supplements.
- Consider using sauces and spices to increase taste. Daily exercise, with your doctor's approval, may increase your appetite.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.
- To help with hair loss, wash with a mild shampoo and avoid washing your hair every day. Avoid coloring your hair.
- Avoid rubbing your scalp, pat your hair or scalp dry.
- Limit your use of hair spray, electric curlers, blow dryers, and curling irons.
- If you are interested in getting a wig, talk to your nurse and they can help you get in touch with programs in your local area.
- While you are getting this drug, please tell your nurse right away if you have any pain, redness, or swelling at the site of the IV infusion

## Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of topotecan with food.



- This drug may interact with other medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) that you are taking at this time. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Pain in your chest
- Dry cough
- Coughing up yellow, green, or bloody mucus
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Tiredness and/or weakness that interferes with your daily activities
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Diarrhea, 4 times in one day or diarrhea with lack of strength or a feeling of being dizzy
- Severe pain in your abdomen that does not go away
- Lasting loss of appetite or rapid weight loss of five pounds in a week
- General pain that does not go away or is not relieved by prescribed medicine
- If you think you are pregnant or if you have impregnated your partner

## Reproduction Concerns

- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug may have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use highly effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for at least 6 months after stopping treatment. Men with female partners of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for 3 months after stopping treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for 1 week after stopping treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men and women both, this drug may affect your ability to have children in the future. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm or egg banking.



Revised November 2022

