



Fluorouracil

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About your treatment

Your doctor has ordered the drug fluorouracil to help treat your illness. The drug is given by injection into a vein.

This medication is used to treat:

- colon cancer
- rectal cancer
- breast cancer
- stomach cancer
- pancreatic cancer

This medication is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Fluorouracil belongs to a group of drugs known as antimetabolites. It resembles a normal cell nutrient needed by cancer cells to grow. The cancer cells take up fluorouracil, which then interferes with their growth.

Other uses for this medicine

Fluorouracil is also used to treat ovarian cancer, cervical cancer, and bladder cancer. Talk to your doctor about the possible risks of using this drug for your condition.

Precautions

Before taking fluorouracil,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to fluorouracil or any other drugs.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and nonprescription medications you are taking, especially aspirin, leucovorin, and vitamins.

- you should know that fluorouracil may interfere with the normal menstrual cycle (period) in women and may stop sperm production in men. However, you should not assume that you cannot get pregnant or that you cannot get someone else pregnant. Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should tell their doctors before they begin taking this drug. You should not plan to have children while receiving chemotherapy or for a while after treatments. (Talk to your doctor for further details). Use a reliable method of birth control to prevent pregnancy. Fluorouracil may harm the fetus.
- do not have any vaccinations (e.g., measles or flu shots) without talking to your doctor.

Side effects

Side effects from fluorouracil are common and include:

- thinned or brittle hair
- headache
- weakness or achiness
- drying or darkening of the skin or nails
- sensitivity of skin to sunlight
- blistering skin or acne
- loss of appetite or weight
- tingling in the hands or feet

Tell your doctor if either of these symptoms is severe or lasts for several hours:

- mouth blistering
- fatigue

If you experience any of the following symptoms, call your doctor immediately:

- painful urination or red urine
- black, tarry stools
- diarrhea
- stomach pain
- unusual bruising or bleeding
- swelling of the feet or legs
- cough
- fever
- sore throat
- nausea and vomiting
- rash
- yellowing of the skin or eyes
- joint pain

If you experience a serious side effect, you or your doctor may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online [at <http://www.fda.gov/MedWatch/index.html>] or by phone [1-800-332-1088].

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

Special instructions

- The most common side effect of fluorouracil is a decrease in the number of blood cells. Your doctor may order tests before, during, and after your treatment to see if your blood cells are affected by the drug.

Brand names

- Adrucil®

Other names

- 5-FU

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