



# NEBRASKA CANCER SPECIALISTS

*the Physicians of Oncology Hematology West*

## **Etoposide**

**Trade names:** Toposar<sup>®</sup>, VePesid<sup>®</sup>

**Drug type:** Etoposide is an anti-cancer /cytotoxic chemotherapy drug.

### **How this drug is given:**

- In tablet form by mouth.
- Etoposide is also given through an infusion into a vein (intravenous, IV).
- Etoposide is considered an irritant. An irritant is a chemical that can cause inflammation of the vein through which it is given. If the medication escapes from the vein it can cause tissue damage. If you experience pain or notice redness or swelling at the IV site while you are receiving etoposide, alert your nurse immediately.

### **Side effects:**

Important things to remember about the side effects of etoposide:

- Most people do not experience all of the side effects listed.
- Side effects are almost always reversible and will usually go away after treatment is complete.
- There are many options to help minimize or prevent side effects.

### **The following side effects are common for patients receiving etoposide:**

- Low white blood cell count. (This can increase your risk for infection).
- Low platelet count (This can increase your risk of bleeding).
- Hair loss
- Menopause (chemotherapy induced)
- Loss of fertility. Meaning, your ability to conceive a child may be affected by etoposide. Discuss this issue with your health care provider.
- Nausea and vomiting (especially at high-doses)
- Low blood pressure (if the drug is infused too fast)

### **These are less common side effects for patients receiving etoposide:**

- Mouth sores (especially at high doses)
- Diarrhea (especially at high doses)
- Poor appetite
- Radiation recall

**Other side effects:**

- Metallic taste during infusion of drug
- Inflammation at injection site
- Peripheral neuropathy (numbness in your fingers and toes) may occur with repeated doses.

**Delayed effects:**

- There is a slight risk of developing a blood cancer such as leukemia years after taking etoposide. Talk to your doctor about this risk.

**When to contact your doctor or health care provider:**

Contact your health care provider ***immediately***, day or night, if you should experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 101° F or higher, chills (possible signs of infection).

The following symptoms require medical attention, but are not an emergency. Contact your health care provider ***within 24 hours*** of noticing any of the following:

- Nausea (interferes with ability to eat and unrelieved with prescribed medication)
- Vomiting (vomiting more than 4-5 times in a 24 hour period)
- Diarrhea (4-6 episodes in a 24-hour period)
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Black or tarry stools, or blood in your stools or urine
- Extreme fatigue (unable to carry on self-care activities)
- Mouth sores (painful redness, swelling or ulcers)
- Swelling, redness and/or pain in one leg or arm and not the other
- Numbness or tingling in your fingers or toes
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Pain, redness or swelling at the IV site

**Always inform your health care provider if you experience any unusual symptoms.**