



NEBRASKA CANCER SPECIALISTS

the Physicians of Oncology Hematology West

Mercaptopurine

Trade names: Purinethol®

Other names: 6-Mercaptopurine, 6-MP

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

How this drug is given:

- As a tablet by mouth.
- Take as a daily dose at the same time each day. Preferable to take on an empty stomach (1 hour before or 2 hours after meals).

Side effects:

Important things to remember about the side effects of mercaptopurine:

- 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 mercaptopurine:

- Low blood counts. Your white and red blood cells and platelets may temporarily decrease. This can put you at increased risk for infection, anemia and/or bleeding.
- Liver toxicity. Increased bilirubin, increased liver enzymes, jaundice, abdominal swelling. Increased with higher doses of drug. Usually occurs within 2 months of treatment.

These are less common side effects for patients receiving mercaptopurine:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Poor appetite
- Diarrhea. (rare - usually seen with higher dose)
- Mouth sores (rare - usually seen with higher dose)
- Loss of fertility/ability to conceive or father a child may be affected by mercaptopurine. Discuss this issue with your health care provider
- Skin rash, dry skin, itching, discoloration of the skin
- Darkening of the skin where previous radiation treatment has been given

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:

- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Black or tarry stool or blood in your stools or urine
- Extreme fatigue (unable to carry on self-care activities)
- 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)
- Mouth sores (painful redness, swelling or ulcers)
- Signs of infection such as redness or swelling, pain on swallowing, coughing up mucous, or painful urination.

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