Fluorouracil

- **Fluorouracil** (flure oh yoor' a sill) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancer. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to fluorouracil or to capecitabine (XELODA®) before using fluorouracil.
- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Some drugs, herbal products and supplements may **interact** with your treatment. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of these or before you start taking any new drugs.
- Fluorouracil may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with fluorouracil.
- Fluorouracil may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with fluorouracil. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors, dentists or other healthcare providers that you are being treated with this medication before you receive any other treatment from them.

Side effects that may occur and tips for management

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Fluorouracil **burns** if it leaks under the skin .	Tell your nurse or doctor **immediately** if you feel burning, stinging or any other change while the drug is being given.
Your **skin may sunburn** easily .	**To help prevent sunburn:** • Avoid direct sunlight. • Wear a hat, long sleeves and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days. • Apply a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30.
Nausea does not usually occur with fluorouracil .	
Diarrhea may occur .	• Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fiber foods.
Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed .	.Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day
You may have a sore mouth for a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat. **Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.**	• Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day.
Your **white blood cell**s may decrease 7- 14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 30 days after your last treatment. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low**, you are at greater risk of getting an infection**	**To help prevent infection:** • Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Visit the Urgent Care Unit at the National Center for Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) **immediately** at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
Your **platelets** may decrease 7-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 30 days after your last treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. **You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual .**	**To help prevent bleeding problems:** • Try not to bruise, cut, or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene. Some medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen or other pain medications may increase your risk of bleeding. • For minor pain, try paracetamol (Panadol ®) • Refer to your doctor if any of these medications have been prescribed to you.
Skin rashes may occur**.**	**To help itching:** • You can use calamine lotion. • If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours. • Otherwise make sure to mention it at your next visit.
Loss of appetite may occur and may persist long after discontinuation of fluorouracil	
Hair loss sometimes occurs with fluorouracil. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with fluorouracil. Colour and texture may change	• Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Apply mineral oil to your scalp to reduce itching.

Patient education leaflet
(Adapted from BC Cancer Drug Manual - Canada (Developed: September 1994, Limited revision: 1 February 2010
Prepared by Clinical Pharmacy Department at the National Center for Cancer Care and Research - Version 1 on May 2017

SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heartbeat, face swelling or breathing problems.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer); chills; cough; pain or burning when you pass urine.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in the urine; pinpoint red spots on skin, extensive bruising.
- Signs of **heart or lung problems** such as a fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath, or difficulty in breathing, swelling of ankles, or fainting.
- Sudden **abdominal pain** or tenderness.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- **Painful hand-foot skin reaction such** as painful redness, peeling, tingling, numbness, swelling, or blistering of the palms of your hands and/or the bottoms of your feet.
- **Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.**
- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- **Severe skin irritation.**

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Painless hand-foot skin reaction such as redness, peeling, tingling, numbness, swelling, or blistering of the palms of your hands and/or bottoms of your feet.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth, or throat.
- Heartburn; mild to moderate abdominal or stomach pain.
- Dizziness or trouble walking.
- Eye irritation or changes in eyesight.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR

This is a summary of useful information to help you understand and take your medicine safely .

We are available to answer your questions For urgent inquiries contact :

- **Urgent care unit at the National Center of Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) TEL : 44397179 (available 24 hours, all week days).**

For further information or question contact :

- **Your doctor** (from 7 am – 3 pm) .
- **Clinical Pharmacy section,** TEL: 44397239 (Sun-Thurs from 7 am – 3 pm) .
- **Outpatient Pharmacy**, TEL: 44397531, 44397825 (Sun-Thurs from 7 am – 3 pm) .

Pharmacy Department

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