

The content on the UpToDate website is not intended nor recommended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your own physician or other qualified health care professional regarding any medical questions or conditions. The use of UpToDate content is governed by the [UpToDate Terms of Use](#). ©2017 UpToDate, Inc. All rights reserved.

## Pemetrexed: Patient drug information

Copyright 1978-2017 Lexicomp, Inc. All rights reserved.

(For additional information [see "Pemetrexed: Drug information"](#))

**Brand Names: US** Alimta

**Brand Names: Canada** Alimta

### What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat lung cancer.
- It is used to treat mesothelioma.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

### What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to pemetrexed or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you have kidney problems.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Diclofenac or indomethacin.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

### What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Some infections have been deadly. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.

- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- You will be given a drug that will help stop you from getting a skin rash while getting this drug. Talk with your doctor.
- If you have upset stomach, throwing up, loose stools (diarrhea), or are not hungry, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- If loose stools (diarrhea) or throwing up happens, you will need to make sure to avoid dehydration and electrolyte problems. Talk with the doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- Use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug.
- If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of dehydration like dry skin, mouth, or eyes; thirst; fast heartbeat; dizziness; fast breathing; or confusion.
- Shortness of breath.
- Very upset stomach or throwing up.
- Very loose stools (diarrhea).
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Trouble swallowing.
- Very bad mouth pain or irritation.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Pale skin.
- Swelling.
- A very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause very bad health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

## What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother

you or do not go away:

- Feeling tired or weak.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Loose stools (diarrhea).
- Hard stools (constipation).
- Not hungry.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Change in taste.
- Hair loss.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## **How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.
- Take folic acid 1 week before, during, and for 3 weeks after your care.
- You will need to have vitamin B<sub>12</sub> shots before your first dose and while you are using this drug. Talk with your doctor.

## **What do I do if I miss a dose?**

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

## **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

## **General drug facts**

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Check with your pharmacist about how to throw out unused drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away.

Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Use of UpToDate is subject to the [Subscription and License Agreement](#).

Topic 11270 Version 97.0