Patient information

**How to administer oral Mercaptopurine at home**

Mercaptopurine is a chemotherapy medicine, which is used to treat certain types of cancer and leukaemia.

It is given by mouth in tablet form once a day in the evening.

# **Common side effects**

**Bone marrow suppression**

The bone marrow is where blood cells are made.

There will be a temporary reduction in how well your child’s bone marrow works. This means your child may become anaemic, bruise or bleed more easily than usual, and have a higher risk

of infection.

Please tell your doctor if your child seems unusually tired, has bruising or bleeding, or any signs of infection, especially a high temperature. See information on ‘What to do if your child is unwell (febrile neutropenia)’ in the **RED** section for what to do if your child has a temperature.

Mercaptopurine doses will be regularly adjusted depending on your child’s blood count.

# **Less common side effects**

**Temporary effect on liver function**

Mercaptopurine can cause some mild changes to your child’s liver function. This should return to normal when treatment has finished. Blood tests can be taken (LFTs) to monitor any changes.

**Skin rash**

Please tell your doctor or nurse if your child develops a rash. They will advise you on the most appropriate treatment to use.

**Nausea and vomiting**

Mercaptopurine rarely causes nausea or vomiting. Please inform your doctor or nurse if your child feels sick.

**Sore mouth and ulcers**

If your child develops a sore mouth or ulceration please let your doctor or nurse know. Please refer also to the ‘Mouthcare’ information sheet in the **ORANGE** section.

 Patient information


# **Important information for the safe administration of your child’s chemotherapy**

* Keep all medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.
* You should handle oral chemotherapy drugs with care and avoid touching them. If you prefer you can wear a pair of household rubber gloves to protect yourself. Do not use these gloves for any other purpose. Oral chemotherapy should always be taken as directed by your doctor.
* If your child is unable to swallow tablets you may make a solution by putting the tablets into a clean oral syringe, drawing up a small volume of water and allowing the tablets to dissolve, then give the dose to your child.
* If you accidentally forget to give a dose do not give a double dose. Inform your doctor or nurse and keep to your child’s regular dose schedule.
* If you accidentally spill the solution, wash the area thoroughly with soapy water.
* If the solution accidentally splashes into your eyes, wash with plenty of running water for at least ten minutes.
* After use, wash the syringe in warm soapy water separately from other items and allow to air dry before using it again.
* If your child vomits after taking their dose, do not repeat the dose. Seek advice from your local hospital.
* Dispose of paper towels or vomit soiled waste in a separate rubbish bag and place in your normal rubbish.
* Please return any unused tablets to your local hospital for disposal.

If at any time you are concerned about any of these or any other side effects please telephone the contact numbers on the contact sheet in your patient/parent held oncology record for advice from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

# **Important information about the formulations available**

Mercaptopurine is available as two different strength tablets: 10mg and 50mg.

* Doses of Mercaptopurine can be dispensed as one strength or a combination of strength tablets. Please follow the instructions on the label carefully. If you have any questions regarding the dose to be given, contact the Piam Brown ward or bring the tablets to your child’s clinic appointment.
* If you are concerned that your child’s tablets look different (in size) or take longer to dissolve than normal, please contact the Piam Brown ward to confirm this is correct.

Version 3. Published March 2019. Due for review March 2022.