



American
Brain Tumor
Association®

Providing and pursuing answers™

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Temozolomide (Temodar)

If you have been diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor, your doctor may suggest a drug called temozolomide or Temodar. Temozolomide is a chemotherapy drug commonly used to stop or slow cell growth in certain types of brain tumors.

Temozolomide is the generic name for the drug, and Temodar is its brand name in the United States. In Europe, the drug is called Temodal. The drug received its first FDA approval in 1999 to treat grade III astrocytomas, making it one of the more recent drugs to be approved as a brain tumor treatment. While it has become a standard therapy for treating persons newly diagnosed with a glioblastoma (also known as an astrocytoma grade IV), its use in other types of brain tumors and other types of cancer continues to be explored.

Studies have shown that temozolomide can stop or slow cancer cell growth, and in many instances, prolong life. It works by breaking strands of DNA - the genetic material - inside tumor cells. When DNA strands are broken, the cells are not able to reproduce as well, slowing tumor growth.

Common side effects of temozolomide include, but are not limited to, constipation, fatigue, headache, loss of appetite, low blood platelet count, nausea, vomiting, and weakness. Less common side effects include anemia, low white blood cell count, anxiety, hair loss, back pain, rash, convulsions, diarrhea, dizziness, itching, swelling in the arms or legs, stomach pain, difficulty sleeping, and/or a tingling or burning feeling. Many of these side effects may be preventable or manageable with help from your nurse or doctor. You should communicate with your healthcare provider if you are experiencing any negative side effects as these could be related to your treatments or related to your tumor.

How is temozolomide taken?

Temozolomide comes in a capsule, and is typically taken with water once a day (preferably at bedtime) on an empty stomach (an hour before or after any food intake). Temozolomide capsules should be swallowed whole, not chewed or opened. Because the drug is prescribed based on your body size, your daily dose may contain capsules with different strengths of temozolomide. Your treatment schedule will reflect your individual treatment plan, and depend on how well your body tolerates the treatment. Be very careful to take the medication as prescribed. It is also important to take temozolomide at the same time each day.

Can I touch the capsules?

The patient can touch the capsules. Do not remove the capsules from their package until it is time to take them. If a capsule opens or breaks, be careful not to get the drug on your skin near your eyes, nose or mouth. Breathing in the powder, or other contact with the powder, may be

harmful. If the powder gets on your skin, wash the area thoroughly. Do not put temozolomide in other pill bottles or containers.

Can my caregiver touch the capsules?

Because temozolomide is a chemotherapy drug, only the patient should handle the capsules. If a caregiver helps you take your medication, you should remove the medication from the package. If a caregiver absolutely must touch the capsules for any reason, he or she should wear disposable gloves and wash their hands immediately after handling the drug.

What if I miss a dose?

It is important to follow your schedule as your doctor outlines. However, if you miss a dose take the missed medication as soon as possible and then continue on your regular schedule. If you miss a whole day of medication, **DO NOT** take a double dose the next day. Call your doctor or nurse.

What if I accidentally take too much temozolomide?

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. You also should notify the prescribing doctor as soon as possible. If you are a caregiver, and the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

Why is my temozolomide schedule different from others in my support group?

Temozolomide is available in 5 mg, 20 mg, 100 mg, 140 mg, 180 mg, and 250 mg capsules. Your healthcare provider will prescribe a dose combination that is based upon your body size and your individual treatment plan. If you have any questions about your dose or treatment schedule, call your doctor or nurse before taking the capsules.

Who should not take temozolomide?

You should not take temozolomide if you have had an allergic reaction to dacarbazine, another drug used to treat cancer, as it may cause a similar reaction. Women should not take temozolomide if they are pregnant or expect to become pregnant or are breastfeeding. You may choose to discuss with your healthcare provider the opportunity for egg harvesting if treatment initiation is not urgent. Men taking temozolomide should always wear a condom when having sexual relations with a woman of childbearing potential. Temozolomide is known to impact formation of sperm, thus men/couples interested in childbearing should discuss sperm banking before starting treatment with this chemotherapy. If you have already started taking this medication and are interested in childbearing in the future, you should discuss with your healthcare provider a time when it would be safe to sperm bank or attempt to conceive a child (likely at least 6 months after completion of temozolomide therapy). As always, read the patient information sheet that comes with temozolomide before you start taking the drug, and every time you renew your prescription in case the information has changed.

What drug(s) may interact with temozolomide?

Other chemotherapy drugs may increase the side-effects associated with temozolomide. Before you start taking temozolomide or any other drug, always tell your doctor or pharmacist what prescription (particularly steroids or anti-seizure medications) or non-prescription medications you take – including aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen; herbal products; vitamins; and/or caffeine and alcohol. While you are taking temozolomide, do not start taking any new prescription or over the counter drugs without first consulting your healthcare provider.

Are there any side effects that I should be concerned about?

Call your doctor immediately if you experience unusual bleeding or bruising, a rash, itching, difficulty breathing or swallowing, seizures or infections.

Can anything be done about nausea?

Drugs to prevent nausea and vomiting can be taken before and/or after administration of temozolomide. Some – but not all – people taking temozolomide experience nausea. If you do, please tell your nurse or doctor right way as these symptoms could be related to your treatments or may be related to your tumor. Drugs to treat nausea and/or vomiting may be used alone or in combinations for symptoms that are not controlled with one medication. Communicate early with your healthcare provider if you are not feeling well. The sooner you notify your care team about negative symptoms, the faster you can access medications to provide symptom relief.

What if I can't afford temozolomide?

Information on prescription financial assistance options is available through the ABTA CareLine at 800-886-ABTA (2282), or via email at abtacares@abta.org.

How can I learn more about temozolomide?

Your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist can provide you with print information about temozolomide, instruction sheets for taking the drug, and tips for managing its side effects. Call your doctor's office and ask for the information if you do not receive it.

A consumer information sheet on temozolomide is available from the FDA at

http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/SafetyInformation/ucm211909.htm?utm_source=fdaSearch&utm_medium=website&utm_term=temodar&utm_content=3

The website www.Temodar.com also offers patient and caregiver information specific to temozolomide as well as interactive brain tumor and treatment educational modules.

What can I do with unused temozolomide?

Call your pharmacist for help if you have unused supplies of any prescription drug, including temozolomide. Your pharmacist can advise you based on your state laws for disposal of chemotherapy drugs.

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice and does not provide advice on treatments or conditions for individual patients. All health and treatment decisions must be made in consultation with your physician (s), utilizing your specific medical information.