

Temozolomide (Temodar[®]): What You Need To Know



Allina Health

Temozolomide (Temodar) Chemotherapy

Temozolomide is an anti-cancer (chemotherapy) medicine that stops cell growth and division. The medicine is a capsule that is taken by mouth.

This medicine is used to treat primary brain tumors. A “primary” brain tumor is a tumor that started in your brain. It did not travel to your brain from another part of your body.

How well temozolomide works will be measured with physical exams and imaging tests, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Your Schedule and Information

Your doctor is ordering temozolomide (Temodar) chemotherapy.

You will be taking temozolomide on a schedule of

Your dose is _____ mg each day.

Capsule size(s): _____

Temozolomide will be ordered monthly once your weekly lab results are reviewed.

Laboratory:

Call your pharmacy if you have questions about delivery. You may need to call your pharmacy to receive your full supply.

Chemotherapy pharmacy:

Chemotherapy pharmacy phone number: _____

Call the Givens Brain Tumor Center office, at 612-863-3732, if you have questions or concerns about side effects.

When to Take Temozolomide

- Follow your health care provider's instructions on when to take this medicine. Many people start taking temozolomide on the first day of radiation therapy and stop taking it on the last day of radiation therapy. After radiation, you will have a break in treatment until you see your health care provider in the clinic.
- How long you will take temozolomide depends on how well your body and brain tumor respond to it. Any ongoing chemotherapy treatment will be scheduled after you complete radiation therapy.

For many people, the schedule includes 6 to 18 cycles. Each cycle is 28 days long. During each cycle, there will be days when you will and will not take it.

- Take this medicine at the same time each day. This includes Saturdays and Sundays during a radiation course, which are days you will not have radiation therapy.
- The best time to take temozolomide is before bed.
- You should avoid eating for 1 hour before and 2 hours after each dose.
- If you miss a dose, do not take it late or add it to your next dose. The missed dose will be added as another day of treatment at the end of your treatment cycle. Call your doctor the next business day if you missed a dose.

Notes

- Take your other regular medicines as usual. You may take them at the same time as temozolomide.

Ondansetron (Zofran[®]) is a prescription medicine used to prevent nausea (upset stomach). Take it 30 minutes before taking temozolomide.

- If you feel sick, you may take a dose of anti-nausea medicine every 8 hours or as directed on the bottle. If your anti-nausea medicine does not control your nausea, call your doctor.
- Do not eat your favorite foods, large meals, or foods that are spicy or hot while you feel like throwing up.
- You may use the *My Medicine List* (see pages 13 and 14) to keep track of your medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals, vitamins or other supplements).
- Tell your oncology care team **all** the medicine you are taking. This includes prescription, over-the-counter, herbals, vitamins or other supplements.

How to Take Temozolomide

- Wash your hands well with soap and water before **and** after handling temozolomide. Anyone who helps you take temozolomide should also wash their hands the same way.
- Take temozolomide with a full glass of water.
- Do not chew or take apart the capsules.
- You may have to take more than one capsule to make the dosage you need. The dosage you receive is based on your height and weight. The dose may change after radiation therapy and again after your first cycle.
- Only take the temozolomide capsule(s) out of the package when it is time to take the medicine.
 - Do not keep the capsules in other containers or with other pills.
 - Store the capsules away from heat and light.

Special Precautions

- **Do not** drink alcohol while you are taking temozolomide, even on the off days.
- Do not take temozolomide if you have an allergy to dacarbazine (DTIC), another chemotherapy medicine.
- If you have an infection or are prescribed antibiotics by another provider for any reason, call your doctor.

Side Effects

This is a partial list of the side effects that you may have with this medicine. You may have some, all or none of those listed. You may have other side effects not listed. Most side effects last only a short time.

Common side effects include:

- lowered white blood cell and platelet counts (occurs 2 to 3 weeks after treatment)
- nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- constipation (unable to have a regular bowel movement)
- loss of appetite
- hair thinning
- lethargy or fatigue
- headache.

Less common side effects include:

- lowered red blood cell count
- feeling dizzy or unsteady
- skin rash or itchy skin.

Food and Drink

- You need to eat well-balanced foods so your body can stay strong and healthy. This includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and dairy.
- Temozolomide may decrease your appetite. Eating small meals or snacks often during the day may be easier for your body than eating 3 larger meals a day.

Talk with your doctor if you have concerns about your appetite or weight. Your doctor may suggest you take nutritional supplements (Ensure® or Boost®) to add calories.

- Do not start taking any vitamins, supplements, herbal or natural products without first talking with your neuro-oncologist.
- **Do not** drink alcohol during your chemotherapy. This includes days when you are and are not taking temozolomide.

Nausea and Vomiting

- Take your anti-nausea medicine as directed. Call your doctor if this medicine does not work.
- Do not eat your favorite foods, large meals, or foods that are spicy or hot while you feel like throwing up.

Lab Work

- Temozolomide can lower the number of blood cells your body makes:
 - white blood cells (fight infection)
 - red blood cells (carry oxygen through your body)
 - platelets (help clot blood and promote healing).
- To check your blood cell count, you will need your blood drawn **every week on Monday or Tuesday. This includes weeks when you are not taking temozolomide.** Call your doctor if you cannot keep an appointment.

Your blood draws will start the week before you begin chemotherapy. After you complete chemotherapy, keep having your blood drawn each week until your health care team gives you other directions.

- Call your doctor if you have unusual bleeding or bruising.
- You may use the calendar on pages 17 to 22 to write down when you have future health care visits.

Fatigue

- Staying active is the best way to reduce and prevent cancer-related fatigue. Doing activities like walking can make you feel more refreshed than if you have no physical activity.
- Get at least 10 to 15 minutes of walking 2 to 3 times each day. Ask your health care team about the cancer rehabilitation program and ways to improve fatigue.
- Balance your activity with rest. Get good sleep each night.

Infection

You may be able to get an infection easier while taking temozolomide. Call your doctor if you have signs of an infection, such as fever, chills, redness or swelling.

Use the following list to decrease your risk of infection.

- Wash your hands with soap and water often. Ask those around you to do the same.
- Avoid being around people who are sick.
- Ask your health care team if you should have any vaccines, such as the flu shot.
- Take good care of your teeth and mouth.
- Take a prescription medicine (antibiotic) once you start radiation therapy. You will take this until you are done with radiation therapy. This will help to prevent certain types of pneumonia. You will take one of these medicines:
 - sulfa (Bactrim™ DS). You would take this pill every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
 - dapsone. You would take this pill every day.
 - pentamidine, an outpatient treatment you would be scheduled to receive. This is a medicine that you would breathe in (inhale). You would have 1 or 2 treatments about 4 weeks apart for this medicine.
- You may use the *My Medicine List* (see pages 14 and 15) to keep track of your medicines.

- Avoid getting any cuts or scratches. If you do, keep them clean.
 - Use caution around sharp objects, such as knives and scissors.
 - Use an electric razor instead of blades.
 - Wear long pants and gloves when working around the house or in the yard. Wear slippers or shoes at all times, even in the house.
 - Trim your nails carefully. Trim them straight across with a nail clippers. Do not pick at the cuticle.
 - Avoid activities that may increase your risk for injury, such as contact sports.

Constipation

- To manage constipation (being unable to have a regular bowel movement), you may:
 - eat high-fiber foods, such as beans, peas, popcorn, nuts, vegetables, fresh fruit, whole-grain breads and bran cereals
 - drink fruit juices, such as prune juice
 - stay hydrated. Drink about 8 glasses of liquids each day unless your health care provider gives you other instructions.
 - take a mild laxative (sennoside, Senokot[®]), stool softener (docusate sodium, Colace[®]) or a medicine that contains both (Senna-S). You can buy these over-the-counter medicines at your local pharmacy in generic forms.
- Do not strain or force bowel movements.
- Call your doctor if you have constipation for more than 2 days.

Mouth Care

- Use toothpaste that is gentle, such as Biotène[®] or Tom's of Maine[®].
- Use mouthwash that is alcohol-free.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. Gently brush and floss your teeth.
- Go to the dentist for regular gentle cleanings and exams. Call your doctor if you need other dental work. Your cancer treatment plan may affect when you have other dental work done.

Sun Protection

Use sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher when you spend more than 15 minutes outdoors.

Temozolomide makes you more sensitive to the sun and your skin may burn easily, even if you never had a problem with sunburn before.

Sexual Health

- You may have changes in your menstrual cycle or sperm count.
- Talk with your doctor about birth control. You should not get pregnant or father a child while taking this medicine.
 - **Important:** If you are thinking about getting pregnant or fathering a child in the future, talk with your health care provider about planning a pregnancy.
- Chemotherapy can be passed to another person through blood and body fluids. To protect your partner, use barrier protection (condoms) during oral sex and intercourse if you have taken temozolomide within the last 72 hours.
- Do not breastfeed while taking temozolomide.

How to Refill Temozolomide

- Call your pharmacy every month to refill your prescription and confirm your address. Your prescription could change each month depending on your lab results or changes in your weight. The dosage could go up or down.
- Refills will be delivered to your home.
- Call your neuro-oncology office know if you have changes to your medical insurance.

Unused Temozolomide

Call your neuro-oncologist and pharmacy if you have unused temozolomide. The pharmacist will tell you how to properly throw it away based on state laws.

Do not get rid of it by flushing it down the toilet or putting it in the garbage.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if you have:

- fever
- chills
- cough
- redness or swelling
- sore throat
- unusual bleeding or bruising
- wheezing, shortness of breath or problems breathing
- rash
- mouth sores
- a whitish coating on your tongue
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhea you cannot control
- constipation for more than 2 days
- been prescribed antibiotics by another provider.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information about this medicine.

Before Starting Temozolomide

- Know how and when to take all your medicines and refill your prescriptions. Know how to store your medicines and their side effects. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist any questions or concerns about your medicine.
- Ask your health care team if you should have any vaccines, such as the flu shot.
- Talk with your doctor about birth control. You should not get pregnant or father a child while taking this medicine.
- Make sure you have:
 - temozolomide
 - Ondansetron (Zofran[®]) to prevent nausea
 - antibiotic (page 7 for the one you are taking)
 - stool softener to treat constipation
 - sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher
 - toothpaste that is gentle, such as Biotène[®] or Tom's of Maine[®]
 - mouthwash that is alcohol-free
 - a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Consider participating in a cancer rehabilitation program. Talk with your health care provider to see if this is right for you.
- Optional: Fill out the *My Medicine List* (see pages 14 and 15) to list any allergies and keep track of your medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals, vitamins or other supplements).

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Notes or Questions



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