



Mass General Brigham  
Mass General Cancer Center

# Xeloda (capecitabine)

Chemotherapy teaching

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# What is Oral Chemotherapy?

- Oral chemotherapy:
  - Is a cancer treatment you take by mouth. It may come in a tablet, capsule, or liquid form. It is just as strong or effective as other forms of chemotherapy.
  - May allow for less frequent medical appointments.
  - Is different from hormone therapy such as tamoxifen or aromatase inhibitors.
  - Is different from oral targeted cancer therapy
- How Xeloda (capecitabine) works:
  - In the body, Xeloda (capecitabine) gets broken down into substances that interfere with the production of DNA, RNA, and proteins.
  - This stops cancer cells from growing and dividing

# Reasons for Taking Xeloda (capecitabine)

- Your treatment team may prescribe Xeloda (capecitabine) to control and reduce cancer if you have:
  - A personal history of metastatic breast cancer
  - A personal history of early stage HER2- breast cancer with residual disease, or cancer cells that remain after attempts to remove the cancer have been made such as chemotherapy or surgery.
- We will talk with you about how long you need to take this therapy.

# How to Take Xeloda (capecitabine)

- You need to follow a specific schedule when taking your oral chemotherapy to make sure that it is safe and effective. Take your medication as directed.
- Your cancer team may modify the dose or schedule based on lab results or side effects
- A typical “cycle” or schedule of capecitabine is **twice daily (12 hours apart) for 7-14 days, then take 7 days off.**
- Swallow whole with water and do not break, chew, or crush your tablets.
- **Take within 30 minutes of a meal.**
- If you miss a dose, skip the dose. Do not take 2 doses at the same time to make up for the missed dose.

# Keeping Track of Your Oral Chemotherapy Schedule

- Create a medicine calendar either on paper or in your tablet or phone to keep track of your doses.
- Share the calendar with your cancer treatment team at visits.
- Pill boxes can be used to keep track of your oral chemotherapy doses. Do not mix other pills in the box you use for your oral chemotherapy.

# Example Medication Calendar

\*blank calendar available on last slide

	Date	Time	# of Xeloda Tablets Taken	Comments
Day 1	1/1/2021	8:30 AM 8:30 PM	3 tabs in AM and 3 tabs in PM	Mild nausea – took Compazine x1
Day 2	1/2/2021	8:30 AM 8:30 PM	3 tabs in AM and 3 tabs in PM	
Day 3	1/3/2021	8:30 AM 8:30 PM	3 tabs in AM and 3 tabs in PM	
Day 4	1/4/2021	7:45 AM 8:00 PM	3 tabs in AM and 3 tabs in PM	
Day 5	1/5/2021	8:30 AM ----- PM	3 tabs in AM and 0 tabs in PM	Forgot evening dose – skipped it
Day 6	1/6/2021	8:30 AM 8:30 PM	3 tabs in AM and 3 tabs in PM	
Day 7	1/7/2021	8:30 AM 8:30 PM	3 tabs in AM and 3 tabs in PM	
Day 8		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 9		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 10		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 11		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 12		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 13		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 14		__:__ AM __:__ PM		
Day 15		<b>REST DAYS</b> <b>No Capecitabine (Xeloda®) Tablets</b>		
Day 16				
Day 17				
Day 18				
Day 19				
Day 20				
Day 21				

# Side Effects of Xeloda (capecitabine)

## Common:

- Fatigue or tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Hand and foot skin changes (redness, dryness, peeling)
- Mouth sores
- Low blood counts
  - Decrease in white blood cells that fight infection
  - Decrease in red blood cells that deliver oxygen throughout the body
  - Decrease in platelets that help blood to clot

## Rare:

- Signs of infection—Fever (temperature of 100.4 or higher), cough, sore throat, chills
- Signs of bleeding—Black, tarry, or bloody stool or vomiting blood (may look like coffee grounds)
- Severe diarrhea—more than 4 loose stools in a day, persistent diarrhea despite taking Imodium after 24 hours
- Symptoms of a liver problem—Dark urine, yellowing of skin or eyes
- Symptoms of dehydration—confusion, dizziness, more thirst
- Signs of a severe skin reaction—rash, blistering or peeling



# Capecitabine May Have Drug Interactions

- Some drugs or supplements should not be taken at the same time as other drugs because they can cause side effects or cause the drug to not work well. This is called a drug interaction.
  - Some common drug interactions include:
    - Folic acid (>500mcg)
    - Alcohol
    - Antacids (ask your team)
    - Warfarin
- Tell your treatment team about ALL prescription and over-the-counter medications (this includes vitamins and herbal products)
- Talk with your treatment team or pharmacist before starting any new medications or supplements.

# Managing Diarrhea

## Diet:

- Eat a bland diet that is easy to digest until diarrhea resolves
- BRAT diet: bananas, rice, applesauce, toast
- Do not eat high fiber foods (raw vegetables/fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans)
- Do not have dairy, alcohol, caffeine, spicy and fried foods

## Stay Hydrated:

- Drink 8-10 glasses (64-80 ounces) of non-caffeinated, non-carbonated beverages daily
- Gatorade, Pedialyte, or other beverages with electrolytes may be recommended with severe diarrhea

# Medication for Management of Diarrhea

- Imodium (loperamide) is the medication of choice for diarrhea during cancer treatment. It is available over the counter.
- **Instructions for use:**
  - **Take 2 tablets (4mg) with your first loose/watery stool**
  - **Then take 1 tablet (2mg) every 2-4 hours thereafter**
  - **Do not take more than 8 tablets (16mg) in 24 hours**
- Contact your care team if you continue to experience diarrhea after taking Imodium for 24 hours
- Refer to <https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/mgh/pdf/cancer-center/breast-cancer/bowel-management.pdf> for more information.

# Managing Mouth Sores

- Perform good mouth care
- Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush after meals and before bed
- Floss gently daily
- Rinse your mouth every 2-3 hours, after meals and before bed (do not use mouthwash that contains alcohol)
- Recipes for homemade salt or baking soda rinses
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt in 8 ounces of water
  - 1 teaspoon baking soda in 8 ounces of water
  - 1 teaspoon salt plus 1 teaspoon baking soda in 32 ounces of water to use throughout the day (make fresh daily)

# Managing Mouth Sores

- Keep your mouth moist
- Drink water (at least 8 glasses per day) or spray your mouth with water throughout the day
- Suck on sugar-free candy or chew sugar-free gum
- Moisten lips with plain, non-medicated lip balm (avoid menthol)
- Medication management
  - If your mouth sore pain is severe or interferes with eating, drinking, or swallowing, we may prescribe a numbing mouth rinse or oral pain medication
  - Refer to <https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/mgh/pdf/cancer-center/breast-cancer/mouth-care.pdf> for more information

# Managing Nausea

- Take anti-nausea medications as prescribed
- If your appetite is decreased, try eating smaller but more frequent meals (every 2-3 hours) throughout the day
- Avoid fried, overly spicy or fatty foods
- Avoid strong smells
- Try acupuncture or acupressure
- Tell your care team if you are unable to eat or drink or are vomiting

# Managing Hand and Foot Skin Changes

- Apply a thick cream (such as Eucerin, Aveeno, Udderly Smooth, or Lubriderm) to palms and soles of feet at least twice daily
- Apply 2 grams of 1% diclofenac gel (Voltaren gel) to the palms of your hands and soles of your feet twice daily (measurement indicator included with the product); this product is available over-the-counter, you do not need a prescription
- Do not wear tight-fitting shoes or socks
- Do not take hot showers or baths, which can dry out your skin
- Check your palms and soles for any cracks, blisters, or peeling skin
- Call your treatment team if you have peeling, painful cracks, or blisters

# How to Prevent Infections

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds after touching surfaces and dry your hands thoroughly afterwards
- Use a hand sanitizer if you cannot readily wash your hands
- Avoid having contact with other people who are sick
- Avoid crowds of people



# Supportive Care Resources

- Yoga
- Acupuncture / Acupressure
- Massage
- Support groups
- Survivorship programs
- Workshops
- Music therapy, Art therapy
- To learn more about all our Supportive Care offerings log onto [cancercenterpx.org](https://cancercenterpx.org)

# Storage and Handling of Xeloda (capecitabine)

- Keep this medicine in its original bottle or separate pill box – do not mix other medications into the pill box.
- Store at room temperature in a dry location away from direct light.
- Keep this medicine out of reach from children and pets.
- Wash your hands before and after handling this medicine.

# Disposal of Xeloda (capecitabine)

- If you have unused medication, do not throw it in the trash and do not flush it down the sink/toilet.
- You may dispose of this medication by:
  - Calling your city or county's trash and recycling service for information on hazardous drug take-back programs in your community.
  - Bringing unused oral targeted therapy to MGH Boston and disposing in the blue drug take-back receptacles located outside of the Main Lobby Yawkey elevators or near the retail pharmacy in the Wang building. MGH Waltham does not accept unused oral chemotherapy.
  - Asking your treatment team or pharmacist for more information.

# Fertility

- Your treatment can affect fertility in women and men.
- Infertility means you cannot become pregnant or make someone pregnant. Infertility related to chemotherapy can be temporary or permanent.
- Before starting treatment, talk with your healthcare team about preserving your fertility and what you can do.
  - Egg harvesting for women and sperm banking for men may be options before starting chemotherapy.



# Sexuality and Birth Control

- It is fine to be sexually active while receiving capecitabine.
- **Xeloda (capecitabine) can harm a developing baby.** You should not get pregnant or get someone pregnant while take either of these medications.
- Women may notice a change in their menstrual periods during chemotherapy treatment. Bleeding may lessen, become spotty, or stop completely. Women can still get pregnant even if their menstrual period changes or stops. **Always use a reliable form of birth control.**
- Use a reliable barrier contraceptive (e.g. condoms) method during treatment **and for at least 6 months after the last dose of Xeloda (capecitabine).**
- Tell your healthcare team right away if you have unprotected sex or if you think that birth control has failed.



# Your Breast Cancer Team

- Oncologist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Pharmacist
- Oncology Social Worker
- Practice Nurse
- Infusion Nurse



# When to call?

*If experiencing:*

- Fever of 100.4F (38C) or higher
- Chills
- Bleeding/unusual bruising
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Dizziness
- Problems with urination
- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting
- Uncontrolled diarrhea
- Flu-like symptoms
- Extreme fatigue or weakness
- Cough or shortness of breath
- Confusion or agitation
- Rapid heartbeat
- New swelling in arms/legs, face
- Uncontrolled pain or new pain
- COVID-19 or other infectious disease exposures



# Contact Information

- For urgent matters, please call. For all other non-urgent matters, please use the patient portal
- **Phone Numbers:**
  - Boston: 617-726-6500
  - Waltham: 781-487-6100
  - Danvers: 978-882-6060
- **Patient Portal:**
  - [patientgateway.org](http://patientgateway.org)





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