

Fluorouracil

Description

Fluorouracil (also called 5-FU or Adrucil[®]) is an anticancer medicine. It is a clear to yellow-colored liquid given by vein (IV).

Fluorouracil can pose a health hazard to caregivers. All caregivers should take safety precautions while giving this drug. For 48 hours after this drug is given, the patient's body fluids can contain the drug. During that 48-hour period, caregivers should follow safety guidelines when handling the patient's vomit, blood, urine, and bowel movements, including diapers. These guidelines include wearing gloves when cleaning up body fluids. For a complete list of safety precautions, see "Do you know... Protecting caregivers from drug hazards."

Possible side effects

Early

- Nausea and vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Bruising at site of injection

Later (usually more than a day after treatment starts)

- Low blood counts with a higher risk of infection, bleeding, anemia, and tired feeling
- Mouth sores that extend to the throat and stomach, causing sore throat, heartburn, and stomach pain
- Tingling of the hands and feet
- Stomach ulcers and bleeding
- Skin rash and more sensitive to the sun and sun lamps
- Change in the color of the skin and nails
- Hair loss
- Headache
- Feeling confused

These are the most common side effects, but there may be others. Please report all side effects to the doctor or nurse.

In case of a severe side effect or reaction, call the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist at 595-3300. If you are outside the Memphis area, dial toll-free 1-866-2STJUDE (1-866-278-5833), and press 0 once the call is connected.

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

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Special instructions

- Use a sunscreen lotion to protect your skin from the sun while you are receiving this medicine.
- If you have severe diarrhea, severe vomiting, sore throat, or stomach pain, tell your doctor right away.

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