Thalidomide (Thalomid®) is an oral medicine that your doctor prescribed for the treatment of your cancer. Please take your thalidomide as directed by your prescriber.

How is this medication taken?

- Take your thalidomide at bedtime.
- Take thalidomide with a full glass of water — preferably at bedtime and at least an hour after your evening meal.
- Contact your cancer clinic if you are unable to take thalidomide as prescribed, including if you are unable to swallow the capsule.

Are there any drugs or foods I should avoid with thalidomide therapy?

- There are some drug and herbal interactions with thalidomide. Please contact your cancer clinic or the UMCCC oral medications for cancer therapy service if you are taking or interested in taking any new over-the-counter medication, vitamin, or herbal product or if a physician other than your oncologist has prescribed any new medication for you. We will review for the risk of interaction with thalidomide.
- There are restrictions on the use of thalidomide due to the risk of serious birth defects. Only certain doctors and pharmacists offer it. There is a program of special requirements in place before you start this drug (S.T.E.P.S program).
**What side effects can occur with thalidomide therapy?**

This information does not cover all possible side effects. Refer to the attached information for each chemotherapy agent for further information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Side Effects</th>
<th>What Can I Do?</th>
<th>When to Call your Cancer Clinic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Decrease in blood cell counts**  
(white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets) |  
- Wash hands regularly  
- Avoid close contact with others who are sick  
- Avoid activities with high potential for injury and bleeding (i.e. contact sports, etc.)  
- The clinic will monitor your labs to assess |  
- Temperature of 100.5˚F or higher- CONTACT IMMEDIATELY  
- Any signs of infection  
- Unusual tiredness or weakness  
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing  
- Unusual bleeding or bruising  
- Dizziness/lightheadedness |
| **Fatigue / Sleepiness** |  
- Don't over-exert yourself  
- Rest when you’re tired |  
- Unable to perform normal daily activities |
| **Constipation** |  
- Stay well-hydrated  
- See “Nutritional Management of Constipation” handout  
- Use over-the-counter (such as senna, docusate) as directed by your cancer clinic |  
- No bowel movement in 3 or more days  
- Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting |
| **Rash** |  
- Avoid direct sunlight (cover exposed areas of skin and use sunscreen)  
- Use antihistamines (anti-itch) medications as prescribed |  
- If rash becomes bothersome, if there are any open areas, or if you are unable to perform normal daily activities due to the rash  
- If rash is itchy despite use of antihistamine medications  
- If the skin is bleeding or looks red and/or infected |
### Common Side Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rash continued</th>
<th>What Can I Do?</th>
<th>When to Call your Cancer Clinic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Apply non-scented lotion to affected areas to avoid dryness</td>
<td>• If multiple areas of the body are affected by the rash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Less Common Side Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Clots (Deep Vein Thrombosis/Pulmonary Embolism)</th>
<th>What Can I Do?</th>
<th>When to Call your Cancer Clinic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Shortness of breath</td>
<td>• Chest pain</td>
<td>• Swelling/tenderness/redness in the leg or arm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peripheral Neuropathy Tingling in the hands, legs, feet</th>
<th>What Can I Do?</th>
<th>When to Call your Cancer Clinic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Discomfort that affects your ability to work or perform normal activities (i.e. unable to grasp a pen/pencil, unable to button your shirt, or unable to feel the bottoms of your feet making walking difficult)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**More information:**

This document should be combined with “What to Expect, A Guide to Oral Chemotherapy Treatment at the University of Michigan” and the “Oral Medications for Cancer Therapy” documents. Ask your nurse or pharmacist for these documents if you did not receive them, or for more information, visit the Patient Education Resource Center in the Cancer Center.
Who to Call With Questions

- For medical emergencies call 911.
- For symptoms or possible side effects related to your medications, please call your Cancer Center clinic.
- For questions about drug coverage, ability to receive the medication, drug interactions with over-the-counter medications, herbal products and new prescription medications or help in remembering to take your medication, please contact the Oral Medications for Cancer Therapy Service at 734-232-6366 or cc-oral-chemo@med.umich.edu.

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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