Hydroxyurea for Sickle Cell Disease Treatment

What is Hydroxyurea (hye-drox-ee-ure-EE-a) and how does it work?

Hydroxyurea is a medicine used to prevent a pain crisis and acute chest syndrome in sickle cell disease. It works by increasing hemoglobin F and the water (hydration) content in your red blood cells. Other names for this drug are Droxia and Hydrea.

What should I tell my doctor before taking this medicine?

Talk to your doctor about the following:

• The medicines/pills you take, including:
  ▶ Medicines ordered by any of your doctors
  ▶ Herbal supplements
  ▶ Vitamins
  ▶ Over-the-counter medicines

• This medicine can cause birth defects and should not be taken by women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. This medicine should not be taken by men who are planning a pregnancy with their partner. Your doctor will talk with you about the importance of using birth control while you are taking this medicine and for 1 year after your treatment ends.
How do I take this medicine?

- This medicine is a capsule that you take by mouth. Your doctor will tell you how much and when you should take this medicine. This medicine needs to be taken as ordered by your doctor to work. **It is important to talk to your doctor before you stop this medicine.**

- Take this medicine at the same time each day. If you miss a dose, wait until it is time for your next dose. Skip the missed dose. **Do not double up on doses.**

- This medicine should be taken on an empty stomach (1 hour before or 2 hours after eating).

- Take this medicine at bedtime to decrease your chance of an upset stomach.

- Keep this medicine away from children and do not share it with anyone.

- **This medicine should be handled with care, and people who are not taking this medicine should be careful to not touch it.** To reduce your chance of touching the medicine:
  - Wash your hands well before and after you touch the bottle or capsules.
  - Bring outdated medicine or extra medicine to your clinic or pharmacy for disposal. Do not flush the capsules down the toilet or throw them in the trash.

- While you are taking this medicine, your doctor will check your blood work. When you start this medicine, your doctor may change your dose a few times to make sure you are getting the dose that works best for you.

- It is important to have your blood drawn and keep all your doctor appointments while you are on this medicine. Always bring a list of your current medicines with you to your doctor appointments.

What are the side effects of this medicine?

Everyone responds differently to treatment. Some of the more common side effects of this medicine are:

- Constipation (difficulty having a bowel movement)
- Diarrhea (loose stools)
• Sensitivity to the sun – it is important to wear protective clothing and sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) when you are outside.
• Headache
• Hair loss
• Dizziness
• Drowsiness
• Rash
• Weight gain

When should I call my doctor?
You should call your doctor right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms:
• Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
• Dark colored urine
• Blood in your urine
• Seizures
• Nausea or vomiting
• Stomach pain
• Bleeding
• Sores in your mouth
• Shortness of breath
• Cough
• Rash
• Yellowing of your skin or eyes
• Change in color of your fingernails

Is there anything else I should know about this medicine?
• If you are thinking about starting a family, talk to your doctor about how to safely stop this medicine before you try to become pregnant.
• You should drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day while taking this medicine to stay hydrated.