What is Capecitabine (ka-pe-SITE-a-been) and how does it work?

Capecitabine is an oral chemotherapy drug known as an “antimetabolite”. Another name for this drug is Xeloda. Capecitabine can be given alone or with other drugs to treat cancer. It is made in a laboratory. This drug dissolves in your digestive system and gets absorbed into your blood stream. Once inside the cancer cell, Capecitabine tricks the cancer cell into using it as a building block. This can stop fast growing cancer cells from dividing and making new cancer cells.

What should I tell my doctor before getting chemotherapy?

Talk to your doctor about the following:

- If you have ever had chemotherapy and the names of the chemotherapy drugs you were given.
- If you have ever had kidney problems.
- If you have ever had changes in your heart rhythm or other heart problems.
- If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant. Your doctor will talk with you about birth control while getting chemotherapy.
- If you are breastfeeding.
- If you have been told that you need to start a new medicine.
- The medicines/pills you are taking, including:
  - Medicines prescribed by any of your doctors
  - Herbs
  - Vitamins
  - Over-the-counter medicines
How does my doctor decide my chemotherapy dose?

To determine your treatment dose, your doctor will review the following: your height, your weight, your medicines, how well your kidneys are working, and any other health problems you have.

This drug is taken by mouth twice daily for 14 days, followed by a 7 day break. Capecitabine is sometimes given on a different schedule or with other drugs to treat cancer. You will see the doctor or nurse practitioner about once every three weeks when you are getting this treatment.

How do I handle, store and dispose of Capecitabine?

- **There are special safe handling instructions for this medicine.** Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about the precautions you need to follow when taking this medicine at home.

- Store the medicine in a closed container at room temperature, away from heat, moisture and direct light. Keep away from children.

- Talk with your pharmacist about how to get rid (dispose) of this medicine safely.

How do I take Capecitabine?

- You may have to take two different tablet sizes for your dose.

- **Do not** crush, break, or chew the tablets.

- Take this medicine with food or within 30 minutes after you have eaten. Swallow the tablets with a full glass of water.

- This medicine is taken two times daily, 10 to 12 hours apart.

  Your morning dose of Capecitabine is:
  
  _______ 500 mg tablets and _______ 150 mg tablets

  Your evening dose of Capecitabine is:
  
  _______ 500 mg tablets and _______ 150 mg tablets

- If you miss a dose, wait until it is time for your next dose, and skip the missed dose. **Do not** double up on doses.
- Keep track of what days and times you take Capecitabine by using a calendar or diary.

- **Do not** take more tablets than prescribed for each treatment cycle. This may mean that you have pills left over.

- Your doctor may change your dose in the future to find out what works best for you. Taking a lower dose of Capecitabine does not mean the medicine will not work.

**What are the side effects of this treatment?**

Every person responds differently to treatment. Some of the more common side effects of this chemotherapy are:

- Diarrhea
- Rash or other skin changes, including “hand and foot syndrome”. Hand and foot syndrome may cause tingling, numbness or pain on the palms of your hands and soles of your feet. Your hands and feet may become swollen or red and have small sores or blisters. Your skin may become very dry and begin cracking and peeling.
- Mouth pain or open sores on your lips, tongue or in your mouth
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain, bloating or feeling “full”
- Decreased appetite or taste changes
- Changes in your nails (color changes)
- Hair thinning
- Eye irritation
- Low white blood cell count (may increase your risk for infection)
- Low hemoglobin (may cause you to have less energy and tire more easily)
- Low platelet count (may cause you to bleed more easily or longer than normal and have more bruising)
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

  **A fever can be life threatening if not treated. Your doctor may ask you to go to the hospital.**

- Chills, sore throat, cough or a wound that does not get better
- Pain, redness, blisters or cracking on your hands and feet that keeps you from doing simple tasks, such as walking or buttoning your shirt
- Open sores on your lips, tongue or in your mouth
- Nausea that prevents you from eating or drinking
- Bleeding or bruising, including bloody or black stools or blood in your urine
- Diarrhea (4 or more loose stools in 24 hours) or diarrhea at night
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Chest pain, fast or irregular heartbeat

Is there anything else I should know about this treatment?

- Chemotherapy may make it harder for your body to fight infections. Wash your hands often and avoid people who are sick.
- This treatment requires special precautions to prevent the chemotherapy from coming into contact (through blood, urine, bowel movements, vomit and vaginal or seminal fluids) with others. Your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist can give you guidelines to follow while receiving capecitabine and for 48 hours after your last dose.
- Chemotherapy can change how your body reacts to vaccines. Talk to your doctor before getting any vaccines.
- You should drink 8 to 10 eight-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated fluid each day throughout your treatment. This is important to keep you hydrated while you are receiving chemotherapy.
- You should not receive this medicine if you have severe kidney disease, or a condition called dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency.

- Do not take antacids (Mylanta or Maalox) within 2 hours of taking Capecitabine.

- Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve) for regular aches and pains unless told to do so by your doctor.

For more information about cancer, chemotherapy, side effects or how to take care of yourself during treatment, refer to your Chemotherapy and You book, or ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

You may also find it helpful to watch The James Patient Education videos at http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos to help you learn tips for managing treatment side effects.