Mercaptopurine (mer kap toe PYOOR een)
Patient Education

US Brand Names: 6- Mercaptopurine, 6-MP
Therapeutic Category: chemotherapy

What is this medicine used for?
Used to treat cancer. More specifically this particular drug is used to treat acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL).

How does it work?
Mercaptopurine works by killing rapidly growing cells. This drug will affect all fast growing cells, cancer cells and normal cells, in your body.

What should my doctor or nurse know before I take this medication?

- If you are allergic to any medicines.
- If you are taking other over the counter or prescription medicines, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- If you are, or maybe pregnant.
- If you are breast feeding.

How is this drug given?

- This medicine can be used alone or in combination with other cancer medicine.
- This medicine is taken by mouth. Take this drug in the evening.

What are the general precautions when taking this medicine?

- Talk with your doctor or nurse before taking aspirin, aspirin-containing products, over the counter or prescription medications, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of non-caffeinated liquid every day (unless told otherwise by your doctor or nurse).
- If you or your partner can get pregnant, use birth control during your treatment. Once completing treatment, discuss the timing for discontinuing birth control measures with your provider. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Fertility)

What are the common side effects of this medicine?

- Liver damage may occur: symptoms may include; right sided abdominal pain, loss of appetite and diarrhea. If liver problems occur, it is usually within 2 months of treatment
but may occur within 1 week, or as long as 8 years later.

- **Myelosuppression (drop in number of blood cells)**
  May cause a drop in the number of white blood cells in your body (Neutropenia). These cells fight infection. A drop in the number of these cells puts you at risk for infection. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. Practice good hand washing and avoid people with infections, colds or flu when you are at risk. (pt. teaching sheet Neutropenia)

  May cause a drop in the number of platelets in your body (Thrombocytopenia). Platelets help your blood clot. A drop in platelets put you at risk for bleeding. You may bleed easily during your treatment. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. Avoid injury to your skin and mucous membranes by using a soft toothbrush, electric razor, etc., when you are at risk. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Thrombocytopenia)

  May cause a drop in the number of your red blood cells in your body (Anemia). Red blood cells carry oxygen throughout your body. This drop in red blood cells may lead to you feeling tired/fatigued. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Fatigue)

**Danger signals to report immediately to your doctor or nurse:**

- Signs or symptoms of infection. This includes a fever of 100.4 F (38 C) or greater, chills, severe sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, increased sputum or change in color, painful urination, mouth sores, wound that will not heal, or anal itching or pain.
- Severe nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea not controlled by medication.
- Not able to eat or drink.
- Bleeding from your nose, mouth, gums, or in your urine or bowel movements. Bruising that does not heal.
- Feeling extremely tired, weak, dizzy or light headed.

**How should I store this oral medicine?**

- Keep all medicine out of reach of children and pets.
- Consult your pharmacist for instructions on storage and disposal of this medication.

**What do I do if I miss an oral dose?**
Contact your doctor or nurse. Do not make up a skipped dose without discussing with your health care team.

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