Vincristine (vin KRIS teen)
Patient Education

US Brand Names: Oncovin
Therapeutic Category: chemotherapy

What is this medicine used for?
Used to treat cancer. More specifically this particular drug to treat leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphomas, Wilms' tumor, neuroblastoma, and rhabdomyosarcoma.

How does it work?
Vincristine 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 may be 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 given into a vein.

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-cafeinated 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?
- Peripheral neuropathy: numbness, tingling and pain in hands and feet (stocking glove sensation). Can be as severe as loss of the deep tendon reflexes in the lower extremities
leading to "foot drop" or "wrist drop." Usually occurs after an average of 3 weekly doses, but may occur after just one dose. Most frequent in patients 40 years of age and older.
- Constipation: take motility and stool softener medication as ordered.
- Alopecia: this medication will make your hair fallout. Hair loss starts about 2 to 3 weeks after you get this drug. Hair on your head is often lost first, but body hair can thin. Hair re-growth takes about 3 to 5 months after your last dose of this medication. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Alopecia)

**VESICANT:** This drug will cause tissue damage if it leaks out of your vein. If you feel pain in or around the vein the drug is being administered through, tell the nurse IMMEDIATELY.

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

- Signs or symptoms of infection. This include 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.

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