

HYDROXYCARBAMIDE

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about hydroxycarbamide. It tells you what it is, how it works, how it is used to treat skin conditions, and where you can find out more about it.

What is hydroxycarbamide and how does it work?

Hydroxycarbamide, formerly known as hydroxyurea, affects cells that are dividing rapidly, such as the skin cells in psoriasis and the blood cells in the bone marrow. It is mainly used for blood cancers but is also used to treat severe psoriasis.

How long has hydroxycarbamide been available?

Hydroxycarbamide has been available for more than 30 years to treat psoriasis.

Which skin conditions are treated with hydroxycarbamide?

Hydroxycarbamide is used occasionally for severe psoriasis that is not responding to the usual treatments.

How long will I need to take hydroxycarbamide before it has an effect?

Most patients notice an improvement, which starts after a few weeks and reaches a maximum after 6-8 weeks.

How long will I need to take hydroxycarbamide?

If it is found to be effective, hydroxycarbamide can be taken for months or years. The treatment must be monitored carefully.

What dose of hydroxycarbamide should I take?

Your doctor will advise you. It is available in 500mg capsules and you will usually be asked to take 1 to 3 capsules daily.

What are the possible side effects of hydroxycarbamide?

Hydroxycarbamide occasionally causes important side effects:

- An increased risk of infection – report any illness; and if you are in contact with chickenpox or shingles contact your doctor immediately.
- Reduction of the blood count – anaemia or bleeding.
- Hair loss.
- Skin pigmentation (mild/yellow grey).
- Liver inflammation (rare).
- Kidney abnormality (rare).
- Drug reaction (drug-related lupus) – light sensitivity, muscle and joint pains.
- Leg ulcers.
- Gout.

Stop the hydroxycarbamide and tell your doctor immediately if you develop an infection.