Mercaptopurine in the Treatment of Cancer

**Mercaptopurine** (6-MP®, Purinethol®) is a medication used to treat leukemia. This medication works by starving cancer cells of their essential cell nutrients.

Mercaptopurine is given by mouth.

Your child’s doctor will give you a copy of the treatment protocol and this will include information about the medication dose and when it will be given.

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS (unless otherwise instructed):**

Give this medication two hours after the evening meal without milk products or citrus juices. Follow the instructions given by your child's doctor or nurse.

**SIDE EFFECTS:**

The following side effects are common:

- Low white blood cell count – increasing your child’s risk for infection
- Low platelet count – increasing your child's risk of bleeding
- Low red blood cell count – increasing your child’s risk for anemia
- Mild nausea and vomiting

The following side effects are less common, but can occur.

- Rash
- Darkening of skin
- Diarrhea
- Yellow color of the skin and eyes
- Mouth sores

**Call your child’s doctor or nurse if your child has:**

- Fever of 101.5° F (38.6° C) or greater
- Skin rash
- Bleeding or bruising
- Yellow color of the skin or eyes
- Mouth sores that prevent your child from eating or drinking
**Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.:**
Call your child’s Hematology/Oncology Advanced Practice Nurse at (816) 234-3265.

**Monday through Friday after 5 p.m., and on weekends or holidays:**
Call (816) 234-3000 and ask the operator to page the Hematology/Oncology nurse or doctor "on-call."

**Call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if:**
- Too much medication is taken.
- Medication is accidentally taken.