Giving Oral Chemotherapy for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL)

The information in this brochure lists some medicines that your child may be taking as part of his/her ALL therapy. It also tells how to store and have your child take the medicines.

- The medicines should be stored in a closed container at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and direct light.
- Giving medications can be confusing. Ask the clinic nurse or pharmacist for a calendar or chart to help with giving medications.
- We encourage the use of weekly pill organizers.
- Take special care when touching, splitting, or crushing chemotherapy medications. When handling chemotherapy wear gloves.
- Anyone taking these medications should not drink alcohol.
- Anyone taking these medications should not become pregnant or father a child, and must take measures to prevent pregnancy.
- Please refer to your child’s after clinic visit summary for medication instructions.
- Some children take liquid chemotherapy medications. There is a certain way these medications need to be prepared by the pharmacy. We want to be sure your child gets the correct dose. Ask for instructions for preparing liquid chemotherapy each time you take a prescription to the pharmacy for:
  - liquid mercaptopurine
  - liquid thioguanine
  - liquid methotrexate

References:
Micromedex® Healthcare series
Children’s Oncology Group Protocol Information
Lexi-Comp’s™ Pediatric Dosage Handbook 13th ed
Mercaptopurine

- Take medication at a similar time of day, preferably at night. Studies found that children with ALL had a lower risk of relapse when the mercaptopurine dose is given in the evening when compared to the morning.

- Drink plenty of noncaffeine-containing liquids unless told to drink less by healthcare providers.

- Take on an empty stomach. This means that your child should take the medicine one (1) hour before or 2 hours after a meal. Food may prevent the medicine from working properly or may delay or slow its ability to be absorbed. Do not give with milk or citrus foods or citrus drinks. They can decrease the ability of the medication to be absorbed.

- This medication can be crushed and mixed with soft foods or liquids. Crushed medications should be handled with gloves.

- Your child’s mouth may become sore or irritated. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush or mouth swab to brush your child’s teeth.

Thioguanine

- Take medication at a similar time each day.

- Drink plenty of noncaffeine-containing liquids unless told to drink less by healthcare providers.

- This medicine may make your child’s mouth sore and irritated. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush or mouth swab to brush your child’s teeth.

- Take on an empty stomach. This means that your child should take the medicine one (1) hour before or two (2) hours after a meal. Food may prevent the medicine from working properly or may slow or reduce its absorption.

- This medicine may make your skin more sensitive to sunlight.

  - Use a sunscreen when you are outdoors.

  - Avoid sunlamps and tanning beds.

  - Tell your doctor if you have increased skin redness or other problems.

  - Continue to protect yourself against sunburn for at least 1 month after thioguanine therapy.

Methotrexate (BY Mouth)

- This medicine may make your skin more sensitive to sunlight.

  - Use a sunscreen when you are outdoors.

  - Avoid sunlamps and tanning beds.

  - Tell your doctor if you have increased skin redness or other problems.

  - Continue to protect yourself against sunburn for at least 1 month after methotrexate therapy.

- Avoid vitamins that contain folic acid.

- Take on an empty stomach. This means that your child should take the medicine 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal. Food may prevent the medicine from working properly or may delay or slow its ability to be absorbed. Do not give with milk, citrus foods or citrus drinks. They can decrease the ability of the medication to be absorbed.