

## Patient Treatment Information

# Thalidomide

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Your treatment is called thalidomide (tha-LID-oh-mide) or Thalomid (THAL-o-mid). It is commonly used to treat multiple myeloma and erythema nodosum leprosum (ENL). It has also been used to treat other diseases. It is not completely understood how Thalidomide works. Thalidomide may bolster the immune system and has anti-inflammatory properties. It is also thought that Thalidomide may work by interfering with blood vessel formation in tumor cells. If tumor cells have no access to nutrients through a blood supply, the tumor cells will die.

### What Do I Need to Know Before Starting Treatment?

Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any prescription or over-the-counter products you are taking, including dietary supplements, vitamins, herbal medicines and homeopathic remedies.

Avoid breastfeeding during treatment. It is not known if thalidomide passes into breast milk.

Some drugs can cause sterility. Talk with your healthcare provider about your options if you want to have children in the future.

Do not get any immunizations or vaccinations while taking chemotherapy drugs without the approval of your healthcare provider.

### What Do I Need to Know Before Starting Thalidomide?

Thalidomide may cause severe fetal harm, including life-threatening birth defects. Even one single dose taken by a pregnant woman can cause severe birth defects in a fetus. When taking this medication, women should not have sexual intercourse OR should use at least two forms of effective birth control to prevent pregnancy for at least one month before beginning thalidomide, during thalidomide therapy, and for one month after stopping thalidomide. In addition, women who could become pregnant (women who have not undergone a hysterectomy and who have had a period in the last 24 months) and are being treated with thalidomide will have a pregnancy test done 24 hours before starting thalidomide and regularly while on thalidomide therapy to make sure they are not pregnant. Men who are taking thalidomide therapy should always use a latex condom during any sexual contact (even those who have had a vasectomy). If you or your partner misses a period, has abnormal menstrual bleeding, or becomes pregnant while on thalidomide therapy, stop taking the medication and contact your doctor or healthcare provider right away.

Thalidomide can increase the risk of blood clots in the legs and lungs. Call your healthcare provider immediately if you develop pain or swelling in your legs or if you have sudden shortness of breath and/or chest pain.

Thalidomide can cause drowsiness. Patients should avoid drinking alcohol and taking other medications that can contribute to excessive sleepiness. Patients should avoid operating heavy machinery, including driving a car, while taking this medication.

Thalidomide can cause some of your nerve cells to stop working properly. This is called neuropathy. This problem typically occurs with long term use of thalidomide but it can occur after short term use. Symptoms of neuropathy can include numbness, pain or a burning feeling in the feet or hands. Let your healthcare provider know if you experience these symptoms.

Thalidomide can cause dizziness, especially upon quickly standing from a sleeping position. Be sure to sit upright for a few minutes before standing up if you have been lying down.

Thalidomide can cause an allergic reaction. Symptoms of a reaction include fever, rash, increased heart rate, and a decrease in blood pressure. Your healthcare provider may choose to temporarily stop your thalidomide if you have an allergic reaction.

Thalidomide can cause a slowing of your heart rate. Your healthcare provider will monitor your heart rate while you are on thalidomide to make sure that this is not a problem for you.

Thalidomide can cause serious skin reactions, including a skin condition called Stevens-Johnson syndrome. If you develop a rash while you are taking thalidomide, make sure your healthcare provider knows this and carefully evaluates the rash.

Seizures have been reported in patients taking thalidomide, especially in those patients with a history of seizures.

You should not donate blood while you are taking thalidomide.

If you are a male, you should not donate sperm while taking thalidomide.

Your treatment can interact with other substances, including:

- Barbiturates (phenobarbital, secobarbital, butalbital, etc.)
- Chlorpromazine
- Reserpine

**You should not take this treatment if** you are pregnant or are at risk of becoming pregnant; or if you are allergic to thalidomide or any of its components.

## How Is the Treatment Given?

The dose of thalidomide will vary with your diagnosis. Thalidomide should be taken with water, at least one hour after the evening meal. Bedtime is the best time to take thalidomide since it can cause drowsiness and excessive sleepiness. If you miss a dose, skip it and take the next dose as scheduled. Do not take two doses of thalidomide at the same time to catch up.

It is important to take thalidomide exactly as prescribed. Do not stop the medicine or change the dose without talking with your healthcare provider.

Store thalidomide at room temperature away from children and pets. If you take too much thalidomide, contact your healthcare provider, local poison control center or emergency room right away.

## What Are the Important Side Effects?

All drugs can cause side effects, but every person reacts differently to each drug. The following chart lists important side effects that can occur with your treatment, how often the side effect occurs (common, less common or rare), how to recognize and minimize side effects and possible treatments. Call your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about side effects.

Potential Side Effects	How to Minimize Side Effects	Possible Treatments
<b>Nausea/Vomiting (Common)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feeling queasy or sick to your stomach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eat small, frequent meals and bland foods—such as bananas, rice, applesauce and toast.</li><li>• Eat food cold or at room temperature so the smell of food will not bother you.</li><li>• Avoid fried, spicy or fatty foods.</li><li>• Eat and drink slowly.</li><li>• Drink plenty of liquids during the day, but to avoid bloating, do not drink during meals.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You may be given medicine to help reduce nausea and vomiting.</li></ul>

Potential Side Effects	How to Minimize Side Effects	Possible Treatments
<p><b>Anorexia or Appetite Loss (Common)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having an appetite</li> <li>• Feeling too nauseous to eat</li> <li>• Metallic or medicinal taste</li> <li>• Change in taste causing dislike for certain foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try eating six to eight small meals or snacks each day instead of three larger meals.</li> <li>• Vary your diet and try new foods and recipes.</li> <li>• Take a walk before meals, when possible. This may make you feel hungrier.</li> <li>• Eat with friends or family. When eating alone, listen to the radio or watch TV.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook dinners ahead of time and freeze them in small portions so that cooking smells are minimized.</li> <li>• Let others help with food, but ask that foods be prepared in small portions that can be frozen. And don't hesitate to let them know which foods to avoid.</li> <li>• Add mild spices to change flavor.</li> <li>• It might be helpful to have a program, such as Meals on Wheels, deliver food to you.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Constipation (Common)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in passing stools</li> <li>• Decrease in the normal frequency of bowel movements</li> <li>• Small, hard dry stools</li> <li>• Bloating, gas, cramps and pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids to help loosen your bowels. Drink warm or hot liquids if you do not have mouth sores.</li> <li>• Your healthcare provider may suggest eating foods that are high in fiber, such as bran, vegetables, whole wheat breads and fruit. Add prunes or prune juice, which act like laxatives.</li> <li>• Exercise can help loosen bowels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your healthcare provider may recommend a stool softener.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neuropathy (Common)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbness or tingling feeling in the hands or feet</li> <li>• Muscle cramps</li> <li>• Loss of balance</li> <li>• Difficulty buttoning buttons or picking up objects</li> <li>• Decreased awareness of heat or cold in fingertips and toes</li> <li>• Difficulty hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to avoid the cold or extreme heat.</li> <li>• Wear mittens or gloves, socks and scarves.</li> <li>• If your fingers are numb, be careful with sharp objects.</li> <li>• Beware of hot coffee mugs, pots and pans and dishwasher—you may not feel the heat until you are burned.</li> <li>• If you feel unsteady, be careful on stairs and in the shower.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your healthcare provider may decrease your chemotherapy dose or delay further chemotherapy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infection (Common)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever and chills</li> <li>• Painful urination</li> <li>• Sore throat and cough</li> <li>• Nasal congestion</li> <li>• Swelling or redness of the skin at the site of a wound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often.</li> <li>• Brush and floss your teeth daily.</li> <li>• Clean cuts right away with warm water, soap and antiseptic.</li> <li>• When your white blood cell count is low, stay away from crowds and people with colds or other illnesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be given medicine to increase your white blood cell count.</li> <li>• You may be given an antibiotic to treat or prevent infection.</li> <li>• Your healthcare provider may decrease your chemotherapy dose or delay further chemotherapy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anemia (Common)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatigue or weakness</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Pale skin</li> <li>• Feeling out of breath</li> <li>• Feeling cold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan rest periods throughout the day.</li> <li>• Organize daily activities so that you conserve your energy.</li> <li>• Try to eat a well balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Stand up slowly to avoid getting dizzy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be given medicine to increase your red blood cell count.</li> <li>• Your healthcare provider may decrease your chemotherapy dose or delay further chemotherapy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bleeding (Less Common)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unusual bleeding, easy bruising</li> <li>• Black or tar-like stools</li> <li>• Blood in your urine</li> <li>• Pinpoint red spots on your skin</li> <li>• Bleeding gums or nosebleeds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid aspirin and aspirin-like drugs, such as ibuprofen.</li> <li>• Use caution with sharp objects, such as razors and nail cutters.</li> <li>• Avoid activities that can cause cuts, bumps and bruises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be given medicine to increase your platelet count.</li> <li>• Your healthcare provider may decrease your chemotherapy dose or delay further chemotherapy.</li> </ul>

Potential Side Effects	How to Minimize Side Effects	Possible Treatments
<b>Diarrhea (Less Common)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loose or watery stools several times a day</li> <li>Abdominal cramping, gas and bloating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eat small, frequent meals and bland foods—such as bananas, rice, applesauce and toast.</li> <li>Avoid caffeine; alcohol; raw fruits and vegetables; raw eggs; undercooked meats; spicy, fatty and greasy foods; milk and dairy products; foods that cause gas, such as beans and other legumes; high fiber and high-fat foods; foods left unrefrigerated for more than two hours (one hour for egg dishes and cream or mayonnaise-based foods); bulk laxatives; and stool softeners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drink eight to ten glasses of clear liquids every day.</li> <li>Your healthcare provider may prescribe medicine to help treat diarrhea.</li> </ul>

### Are There Other Possible Side Effects?

The following chart lists additional side effects found with this treatment. It does not list all possible side effects. For more information, talk with your healthcare provider.

Common Side Effects	Less Common Side Effects	Rare Side Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drowsiness, excessive tiredness</li> <li>Confusion</li> <li>Rash</li> <li>Fatigue</li> <li>Edema (swelling in the arms and legs)</li> <li>Muscle weakness</li> <li>Shortness of breath</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood clots</li> <li>Dry skin</li> <li>Cough</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Muscle pain, joint pain</li> <li>Indigestion</li> <li>Insomnia</li> <li>Dizziness, especially upon standing from a lying down position</li> <li>Fever</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allergic reactions</li> <li>Bradycardia (slow heart rate)</li> <li>Seizures</li> </ul>

### When Should I Contact My Healthcare Provider?

Contact your healthcare provider if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Vomiting that is severe or lasts several hours
- Diarrhea that causes an additional four bowel movements a day, diarrhea at night or diarrhea with fever, cramps or bloody stools
- Shaking chills or fever higher than 100.5 degrees F
- Painful or frequent urination or blood in your urine
- Unusual bleeding, easy bruising or pinpoint red spots on your skin
- Inability to eat or weight loss
- Irregular or rapid heart beat
- Chest pain, chest tightness or shortness of breath
- Dizziness or feeling lightheaded
- Pain, redness, swelling or sores in your mouth or throat that interfere with eating

