



Adherence to Oral Cancer Therapy

“Drugs don’t work in patients who don’t take them.”

– C. Everett Coop, former US Surgeon General

The success of oral cancer therapy can hinge on your ability to understand and adhere to the doctor’s plan, and to report any problems or side effects quickly and accurately. When you agree to take an oral cancer therapy, you become a partner with your doctor. **Studies have demonstrated that lack of adherence to a treatment plan is a major reason for treatment failure.**

As of September 2018, there are five FDA-approved oral novel therapies that play an important role in treating myeloma: Thalomid® (thalidomide), Revlimid® (lenalidomide), Pomalyst® (pomalidomide), Farydak® (panobinostat), and Ninlaro® (ixazomib).

To achieve the best results, the patient must:

- Take the correct medicine.
- Take the correct dose.
- Take the medication on the correct schedule (i.e., daily? weekly?).
- Take the medication in the correct manner (i.e., before, after, or with meals? at bedtime?).
- Take the medication for the prescribed length of time.

Do not compromise your care. Give your prescribed cancer therapy a chance to work.

International Myeloma Foundation

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Improving Lives **Finding the Cure®**

Common problems and how to overcome them

- **Do not hesitate to contact your doctor** to report side effects or to clarify treatment issues.
- **If you have no insurance or inadequate insurance coverage**, call the IMF InfoLine to help guide you in finding various financial resources.
- **If your health insurance policy has complex language** on coverage and co-pays, the specialty pharmacy filling your prescription has experts trained to help you. Also, there are drug company-sponsored assistance programs to help you get the treatment you need.
- **If the oral therapy plan is complicated**, or if you feel stressed by the amount of information you have to absorb, make sure that someone reliable is with you when you receive instructions. Ask the doctor to provide the information in written form.
- **If you skip doses or decide not to take the treatment altogether**, you must communicate this to your doctor, who can assess the state of your myeloma and determine if it may be possible for you to have a “drug holiday” or a lower dose of the treatment.
- **If you miss a doctor’s appointment**, call immediately and schedule a make-up appointment as close to your original date as possible.
- **Get the phone and email contact info for your healthcare team**, and learn what to do if they cannot be reached. Find out if you can call a “covering” doctor, or if you must go to an urgent care or emergency facility.
- **Learn about treatment safety recommendations**, including which baseline and follow-up tests can monitor potential side effects (i.e., fatigue, low white blood cell count, gastrointestinal problems, blood clots).
- **If you’re not feeling well enough to manage treatment on your own**, arrange for help at home and/or support through a social worker, case manager, or nurse.