

DES (Diethylstilbesterol)

What is DES?

DES is a female hormone used for the treatment of prostate cancer. It works in the brain by decreasing the amount of lutenizing hormone (LH) being released. It is the LH that stimulates production of testosterone. It is very effective in decreasing your PSA and is a good option for patients who have failed LHRH (Lupron and Zoladex) therapy. It may also be involved in the actual destruction of prostate cancer cells.

How should I take DES?

Take DES exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Take with food if you experience nausea. Keep the medication out of reach of children and animals. Do NOT share this medication with anybody else.

What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose of DES, take it as soon as you can if it is within a few hours of the missed dose. If it is close to the time of your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.

What are the common side effects?

Please see, “Managing Symptoms at Home”, in the manual and refer to the Symptom Management section.

What You May Expect?	What Should You Do?
<i>Blood clots</i> may occur while taking DES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report any symptoms related to clots such as chest pain, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, pain or swelling of your legs or arms. You may be advised to begin therapy with Aspirin 325mg or warfarin (Coumadin) to prevent blood clots. Inform your doctor or nurse immediately if you develop bleeding.
<i>Enlargement and tenderness of breast tissue</i> may occur since estrogen is a female hormone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report symptoms to your nurse or doctor. Your doctor may recommend that you have your breasts radiated to minimize these side effects. You may be referred to a Radiation Oncologist, who will schedule you to receive a low dose of radiation, which is usually done for a very brief time daily for three days.
Your body may retain fluid and <i>swelling</i> of the hands, feet or lower legs may occur. Rapid weight gain may also occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep your legs elevated when sitting or lying down. Inform your nurse or doctor as there are other medications that can be used to treat swelling. These symptoms may be minimized by reducing the

	amount of salt in your diet.
Nausea may occur while you are taking DES.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may be given a prescription for an anti-nausea drug(s) to take at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred. Drink plenty of liquids. Eat and drink often in small amounts. Take your medication with food.
Sexual changes such as impotence and decreased libido are common.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These side effects may return to normal when you stop using the medication.

These are the most common side effects. Others may occur. Please report any problems to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Call and Seek Help Immediately If You Have:

- Signs of blood clots such as chest pain or shortness of breath, sudden severe headache, vision changes, weakness or numbness of the arms or legs, or calf tenderness and swelling.
- Signs of bleeding problems such as black tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin

Contact Your Nurse or Doctor If You Have:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Swelling in arms, hands, feet or legs
- Breast tenderness and enlargement
- Weight gain
- Easy bruising or bleeding

Special Instructions

DES is no longer available in most commercial pharmacies. It is only being sold by special 'compounding pharmacies.' Your nurse or doctor will be able to refer you to such a pharmacy.

DES may harm a developing baby if used during pregnancy. Pregnant or breastfeeding women should not take this medication. Use birth control when receiving chemotherapy. Tell your doctor if you have liver problems, blood clots, gall bladder disease or gallstones, heart disease, or a history of stroke. Talk to your doctor or nurse about any additional questions.

Drug-Drug Interactions

Other drugs may interact with DES. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new medications.

Drug-Food Interactions

None known at this time.

For more complete information please request an additional teaching sheet from the National Library of Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html, your nurse, or visit the Resource Center.