

## THALIDOMIDE

Thalidomide is a medication that is used to treat many different severe skin conditions. It is a medication which often works when all of the conventional treatment is not effective. Being on thalidomide requires maintaining regular followup visits so that I may monitor your progress. It also requires enrolling into the STEPS program (System for Thalidomide Education and Prescribing Safety). This program has been mandated by the Food and Drug Administration.

Thalidomide is a medication which you may have heard about in the past. It was originally developed in the 1960s to treat morning sickness in women who were pregnant. Unfortunately, it caused serious birth defects and was withdrawn from the market because of this.

Thalidomide was recently reintroduced because it can be very effective in certain skin conditions when the standard treatment does not help. It is never prescribed to a woman who plans on becoming pregnant. If you are a woman and able to conceive a child, then there are specific steps which must be taken to ensure you do not become pregnant. In addition a man taking thalidomide should not conceive a child.

Most people who take Thalidomide do not experience any significant side effects. One of the most common mild side effects is drowsiness. That is why the medication is always taken in a single dose at night. If you become somewhat sleepy, you are going to bed anyway.

One of the other common side effects with Thalidomide is a numbness and tingling sensation in the tips of the fingers or toes. This is known as a neuropathy. This is a side effect which is dose related and hopefully can be avoided by keeping your dose low. If you would experience any such symptoms, please let me know. In addition, if you stay on Thalidomide nerve conduction studies may be monitored intermittently.

As I mentioned above, when you are on Thalidomide, you are closely monitored in the office to ensure that no side effects develop. As with any medication mild stomach upset, headache and allergic reactions may occur. Patients taking thalidomide are not allowed to donate blood due to the birth defect concerns. Blood tests are checked regularly, although if you are on stable dosages, these can be spaced out to an every few month cycle.

Although there is a significant amount of paperwork associated with taking this medication, this is an FDA mandated guideline and is primarily directed to prevent pregnancy in women. As I mentioned above, Thalidomide is often effective when the standard conventional therapy is not.

If you have any other questions regarding your treatment after reading this information sheet, please ask me before you leave the office.