

Drug duo approved for aggressive thyroid cancer

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(HealthDay)—Two anti-cancer drugs administered together have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat an inherited form of thyroid cancer.

Tafinlar (dabrafenib) and Mekinist (trametinib) combined have been approved to treat anaplastic [thyroid cancer](#) caused by an abnormal BRAF V600E gene, the agency said Friday in a news release.

Anaplastic thyroid cancer is a rare, yet aggressive form of the disease. Almost 54,000 people will be diagnosed with thyroid cancer in the United States this year, and more than 2,000 will die from it, the National Institutes of Health estimates. Anaplastic thyroid cancer accounts for up to 2 percent of cases, the FDA said.

The same [drug combination](#) was approved previously to treat melanoma and non-small cell lung cancer caused by abnormalities of the same gene, the agency said.

Common side effects of the drug combination include: fever, rash, chills, headache, joint pain, cough, fatigue, nausea and diarrhea. More serious adverse reactions could include: development of new cancers, bleeding problems, heart problems, eye problems, skin reactions, [high blood sugar](#), anemia and blood clots, the FDA said.

Since both drugs can harm a growing fetus, pregnant women and women who are expecting to become pregnant shouldn't take the therapy, the agency warned.

Both drugs are produced by the Swiss drugmaker Novartis Pharmaceuticals.

More information: Visit the [FDA](#) to learn more.

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