

Warning

This fact sheet aims to let you know the side effects most commonly seen following the administration of your treatment. Please note that when you take any medication, there is a possibility that it causes rare side effects and it is difficult to predict which patients will be affected.

General information for patient Protocol Pemetrexed (Alimta™)

Date: September 2011

Revision: November 2015

Medication	Administration
Pemetrexed	Intravenously over 10 minutes
<i>Cycle repeated every 3 weeks</i>	

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General information associated with your treatment

- › This medication is used to prevent the multiplication of abnormal cells and destroy them.
- › A **blood test** will be done prior to every treatment cycle. Depending on its results and side effects of the previous treatment, the dose of medication might be adjusted or treatment might be delayed.
- › Your **appetite may diminish**. Eat more often, in smaller quantities.
- › Your **sense of taste may be altered**. Enhance foods with herbs or lemon juice. Eating fruits, chewing non-sugared gums, etc may mask the metallic taste.
- › **Alcohol** (in small quantities) is permitted and will not affect the efficacy of the treatments.
- › You can have an **active sexual** life during your treatments. However, a decrease in your sexual drive may occur during this period. This may also be influenced by different factors (fatigue, stress etc.).
- › For **male patients**, the sperm count may be affected and negative effects on the embryo may occur. In fact, the production of spermatozooids may be reduced or completely absent during treatments. In certain patients, this reduction of fertility may be permanent, may get better or return to normal after the treatments have stopped. This reduction of **fertility** does not prevent erection or sexual activity.
- › In **pre-menopausal female patients**, chemotherapy may cause irregularities or cessation of the menstrual cycle during treatments. The menstrual cycle, after stopping chemotherapy, may restart or return to normal. It may also stop permanently. However, a pregnancy remains possible and a method of **contraception** is strongly recommended during treatments. Chemotherapy administered during pregnancy may harm the embryo. Breast-feeding is contra-indicated during treatment.
- › Consult your doctor or pharmacist before you take other medications (even over the counter medications available without a prescription) or natural products. These may provoke an interaction with your treatment and diminish its efficacy or increase side effects.
- › Be sure to always have on hand the **complete list of your medications**, dietary supplements, vitamins and other natural health products. Give it to your doctor and your pharmacist. It is important to make them aware of any change.
- › Follow the instructions given by your cancer center about the right way to handle and dispose of biological fluids (for example urine, stools) in order to protect the environment and your relatives.

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Adverse effects and management

Adverse effects	Management
Nausea , usually light, may occur mainly on the same day and the day following your treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Before your treatment, medication to prevent nausea may be prescribed. At home, you may also have to take medication for 1 or 2 days or more, as needed.› Communicate with a member of your healthcare team if your medication does not relieve your nausea.
Depending on the individual, thinning of the hair may occur. In general, this happens 2 to 3 weeks after the start of the treatment. However, don't worry; your hair will grow back after treatments have ended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Use gentle shampoo.› Avoid brushing hair vigorously.› Avoid hair spray, dyes and perms.
A decrease in the white blood cells might occur about 1 week following treatment. You may be at higher risk to contract infections during this period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Wash your hands often.› During this period, avoid coming into contact with people who have contagious diseases.› Contact a member of your healthcare team quickly if you notice any signs of infection (fever, chills, cough, sore throat, pain while urinating...)› Consult your doctor or go immediately to the Emergency Room if you have a fever 38,3 °C (101 °F) once or 38 °C (100,4 °F) twice an hour apart.› In case of fever, try not to take acetaminophen (ex. Tylenol®, Atasol®) and anti-inflammatory medication (ex. : Motrin®, Advil®, Aleve®).

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A decrease in platelets might occur about 1 week following treatment. You may bruise or bleed more easily than you normally do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Use a tooth brush with soft bristles.› Check with your pharmacist before taking medications with Aspirin®, Ibuprofen or other anti-inflammatory drugs.› Contact a member of your healthcare team if you bruise more easily than you normally do or if you have a tendency to bleed easily from the nose or the gums.
Significant fatigue with weakness may occur during your treatments. It is usually temporary and may be related to many factors (medication, stress, disease...).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Maintain a good level of activity but take some rest when you feel tired.
You may sometimes experience diarrhea .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Folic Acid will be prescribed to decrease this effect.› Drink lots of liquids (unless otherwise instructed by your doctor).› Please contact a member of your healthcare team if you have significant diarrhea (more than 3 loose stools per day) for more than 24 hours.
Ulcers in the mouth and the throat may appear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Folic Acid will be prescribed to decrease this effect.› Gently and regularly brush your teeth after each meal and at bedtime.› Rinse your mouth with a solution of water and salt with or without baking soda. Gargle many times a day – after every meal and at bedtime. Do not drink or eat for one hour after you gargle.› Mouthwashes without alcohol found in stores are also useful.› If you notice ulcers, redness or painful areas in your mouth, contact a member of your healthcare team as soon as possible.

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A usually mild skin rash may occur following your treatment. It generally involves the trunk and extremities and might be associated with itchiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Dexamethasone will be prescribed to decrease this effect.› If this occurs and bothers you, consult a member of your healthcare team who will recommend appropriate measures.

Special considerations

- › You have been prescribed two medications to be taken all along your treatment. Folic Acid has to be taken orally once a day and Vitamin B₁₂ is an intramuscular injection to be administered every 9 weeks. It is important that you take them in order to decrease certain adverse effects of pemetrexed. These medications have to be started one week prior the initiation and up to three weeks after the completion of your treatment.
- › Consult a member of your healthcare team in oncology before taking an anti-inflammatory medication for example ibuprofen (Advil^{md}, Motrin^{md}) or naproxene (Aleve^{md}) for it could modify the effect of the treatment.

Pharmacist: _____

Phone: _____

from ____ h to ____ h (Monday to Friday)