

### 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 Gemcitabine and capecitabine

**Date:** November 2017

**Revision date:**

Medication	Administration
Gemcitabine	Intravenous infusion over 30 minutes on days 1, 8 and 15.
Capecitabine	Tablets to be taken twice a day with a large glass of water within 30 minutes after the end of breakfast and supper, for 21 days, followed by 7 days off.  _____ tablet(s) of 500 mg twice a day _____ tablet(s) of 150 mg twice a day
<i>Cycle is repeated every 4 weeks for a total of 6 cycles</i>	

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## General Information associated with your treatment

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- › These medications are used to prevent the multiplication of abnormal cells and destroy them.
- › A **blood test** will be done before each intravenous treatment. Depending on the results and side effects of the previous treatment, the dose of the medications might be adjusted or the treatment might be delayed.
- › You may experience **fatigue** during your treatments. This is usually only temporary and may be related to different reasons (medication, stress, the disease). Maintain a good level of activity but rest when you feel the need to.
- › Your **appetite may diminish**. Eat more often, in smaller quantities.
- › Your **sense of taste may be altered**. Enhance foods with *fines herbes* or lemon juice. Eating fruits and non-sugared candies, 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. Your partner will not be exposed to, nor harmed by chemotherapy effects. However, a decrease in your sexual drive may occur during this period. This may also be influenced by different factors (fatigue, stress etc.)
- › In **pre-menopausal female patients**, chemotherapy may cause irregularities or cessation of the **menstrual cycle** during treatment. The menstrual cycle may restart or return to normal after the end of treatment. The menstrual cycle may also stop permanently. However, a pregnancy remains possible and chemotherapy administered during pregnancy may harm the embryo. A birth control method is strongly recommended during treatment. Breast-feeding is contra-indicated during treatment.
- › 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. A pregnancy remains possible. If you have sex with a woman of childbearing age it is strongly recommended to use a method of contraception during the treatment.
- › Consult your doctor or pharmacist before you take other medications (even over the counter medications available without a prescription) or **natural health products** or if you need to receive a **vaccine**. These may provoke an interaction with your treatment and diminish its efficacy or increase side effects.
- › 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.
- › 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.

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## Adverse effects and their management

Adverse effects	Management
<b>Nausea</b> , usually light, may occur mainly on the same day and the day following gemcitabine.	› Before gemcitabine, medication to prevent nausea may be prescribed.
<b>Nausea</b> , usually light, may occur when taking capecitabine.	› At home, you may also have to take medication as needed. › Contact a member of your healthcare team if your medication does not relieve your nausea.
Depending on the individual, <b>thinning of the hair</b> 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.	› Use gentle shampoo. › Avoid brushing hair vigorously. › Avoid hair spray, dyes and perms.
A decrease in the <b>white blood cells</b> will occur about 1 to 2 weeks after start of your treatment. You may be at higher risk of infections during this period.	› 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, do not take acetaminophen (Ex: Tylenol®, Atasol®) and anti-inflammatory medication (Ex : Motrin®, Advil®).
A decrease in <b>platelets</b> will occur about 1 to 2 weeks after the start of your treatment. You may bruise or bleed more easily than you normally do.	› 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.

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You may sometimes experience <b>diarrhea</b> .	<p>Diarrhea should be treated with loperamide (Imodium®).</p> <p><b>If diarrhea is light (2 to 3 more loose stools per day than before starting capecitabine):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Start loperamide: take 2 tablets first then one tablet after each loose stool (maximum 8 tablets in a 24 hours period).</li><li>› Contact a member of your healthcare team if the diarrhea does not improve after taking loperamide for 24 hours.</li></ul> <p><b>If you have moderate to severe diarrhea (more than 4 loose stools per day compared to before starting) or if you have diarrhea at night:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› <b>Stop taking capecitabine</b> and contact a member of your health care team.</li><li>› Start loperamide: Take 2 tablets first then one tablet after each loose stool (maximum 8 tablets in a 24 hours period).</li></ul> <p><b>Other actions to take :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Drink lots of fluids (8 to 10 glasses a day) unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.</li><li>› Eat and drink often but in small quantities.</li><li>› If you have diarrhea with fever, contact immediately a member of your health care team or go to Emergency Room.</li></ul>

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<b>Hand and foot syndrome</b> may appear during your treatment. You may experience numbness, tingling, swelling, redness on your hands and feet. Pain, blisters, desquamation may accompany these symptoms.	<p><b>To prevent this syndrome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Avoid wearing tight clothes or shoes. Wear absorbent sponge rubber soles, and/or gel pads to relieve pressure points.</li><li>› Pat dry your hands and feet rather than rubbing them.</li><li>› Wear light clothing or keep skin free of clothing to avoid perspiring.</li><li>› Wear rubber gloves while washing dishes.</li><li>› Wash your hands and feet in lukewarm water; avoid hot water.</li><li>› Moisturize your skin regularly using a non perfumed emollient and thick cream.</li><li>› Avoid activities that require applying pressure and repetitive friction on your hands and feet.</li></ul> <p><b>If symptoms occur:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› If these symptoms occur and affect your daily activities, <b>stop taking capecitabine</b> and notify a member of your healthcare team as soon as possible.</li></ul>
<b>Mouth ulcers, redness, pain or swelling in your mouth</b> may appear following your treatment. These ulcers can also appear in the throat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Brush your teeth regularly.</li><li>› Rinse your mouth with a solution of water and salt with or without baking soda. Gargle 4 times a day after every meal and at bedtime. Do not drink or eat for one hour after you gargle.</li><li>› Mouthwashes <b>without alcohol</b> found in stores are a good alternative.</li><li>› If you notice ulcers, redness or painful areas in your mouth, contact a member of your healthcare team. If your ulcers are causing pain, <b>stop taking capecitabine</b> and contact a member of your health care team.</li></ul>

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Adverse effects	Management
<p><b>Flu-like symptoms</b> may occur shortly after your treatment with gemcitabine. You may experience mild to moderate symptoms, mainly fever but also chills, headache, muscle or bone pain.</p> <p>These symptoms usually last only a few hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› If these symptoms bother you, your doctor or pharmacist may recommend a pain killer such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Atasol®).</li> <li>› If you experience fever and chills more than 48 hours after your treatment, you may have an infection. Consult immediately a member of your healthcare team or go to the Emergency Room.</li> </ul>
<p>A <b>skin rash</b>, usually mild, may occur following gemcitabine. It generally involves the trunk, the arms and legs and might be associated with itchiness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Consult a member of your healthcare team who will recommend appropriate measures.</li> </ul>
<p>A gradual <b>fluid retention</b> may occur with consecutive treatments and may present itself by swelling of hands, ankles and feet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Raise your feet while sitting.</li> <li>› Avoid wearing tight clothes or shoes.</li> <li>› Notify your doctor if you are gaining weight rapidly, if you experience some swelling or if you are easily short of breath.</li> </ul>
<p>Your skin may become more <b>sensitive to the sun</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Avoid going into the sun.</li> <li>› Use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.</li> <li>› Wear a hat.</li> </ul>
Rare adverse effects that can be severe or serious to communicate quickly to your doctor	
<p>If you experience <b>palpitations of the heart, chest pain</b> and/or <b>shortness of breath</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› <b>Stop taking capecitabine</b> and immediately go to the Emergency Room.</li> </ul>
<p>If you have <b>severe</b> nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, ulcers or pain in the mouth <b>during the first days of capecitabine</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› <b>Stop taking capecitabine</b> and contact a member of your health care team as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
<p>You may experience <b>cough, shortness of breath</b> or <b>feeling out of breath</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Consult immediately a member of your healthcare team or go to the Emergency Room.</li> </ul>

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## Special Considerations

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- › Take your capecitabine tablets twice a day with a glass of water **within 30 minutes after the end of breakfast and supper**. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as possible but do not double your next dose. Try to take capecitabine at the same time every day with doses 10 to 12 hours apart if possible.
- › Keep your medication at room temperature, out of the reach of children and protected from light, heat or moisture.
- › Tablets must be taken whole. Do not chew, cut or crush your tablets.
- › Wash your hands immediately after handling your tablets.
- › Don't throw away unused medication at home. Bring it back to your pharmacy to be destroyed safely.

**Pharmacist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_ h to \_\_\_\_ h (Monday to Friday)