

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 Cytarabine

Date: June 2018

Revision date:

Medication	Administration
Cytarabine	Subcutaneous injection _____ times a day for 10 days
<i>Cycle is repeated every 4 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 before each cycle of 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.
- › 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
Nausea , usually light, may occur during your treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› At home, you may 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, 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 will occur about 2 weeks after start of your treatment. You may be at higher risk of 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, do not take acetaminophen (Ex: Tylenol®, Atasol®) and anti-inflammatory medication (Ex : Motrin®, Advil®, Aleve®).
A majority of patients who receive this treatment will develop a fever at some point. Blood will be drawn to check for bacteria. Having a fever does not necessarily mean that you have an infection, but you will nonetheless be given an antibiotic as a precautionary measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Tell a member of your healthcare team if you notice any sign of infection (fever, chills, cough, throat pain, pain when urinating...).

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A decrease in platelets will occur about 2 weeks after the start of your 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.
You may experience a decrease in red blood cells following your treatment. This is called anemia and is characterised by signs of fatigue, pale color, dizziness and shortness of breath.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Keep active but respect signs of fatigue your body gives you; rest when you feel the need to.› If you notice one or any of these effects, contact a member of your healthcare team.
Ulcers in the mouth and the throat may appear a few days following the start of your treatment. These ulcers can also appear in the throat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› 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 4 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 a good alternative.› If you notice ulcers, redness or painful areas in your mouth, contact a member of your healthcare team.
During your treatment, you may experience some redness, pain, irritation, swelling or a burning sensation at the injection site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Apply cold compresses on the injection site for 15 to 20 minutes a few times a day.› If you notice one or more of these effects and if they persist despite applying compresses, contact a member of your healthcare team.

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Special Considerations

- › It is very important to drink plenty of fluid, especially during the treatment. Furthermore, a medication, allopurinol, could be prescribed to decrease the risks of experiencing problems associated with the rapid destruction of abnormal cells.
- › **If you forget an injection**, you may have it as soon as you remember but do not double your next dose. Try, however, to inject the medication regularly at the same time every day.
- › Wash your hands before and after handling the syringes.
- › Keep the syringes in the refrigerator, out of the reach of children.
- › Throw away used and unused syringes in a rigid container. Bring the container back to your pharmacy and specify that this is chemotherapy to be destroyed safely.

Pharmacist: _____

Phone: _____

from ____ h to ____ h (Monday to Friday)