

Chlorambucil

Leukeran®

Chemotherapy tablets

Understanding your treatment

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is a treatment against cancer that uses drugs to kill cancer cells. Chemotherapy can be used alone or in combination with other treatments such as radiotherapy.

How can chemotherapy help you?

Depending on your type of cancer and the stage of the disease, chemotherapy can be used to :

- **Destroy** cancer cells
- **Stop** the cancer from spreading
- **Slow** the growth of cancer cells

How will you feel while on chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is used to kill abnormal cells in your body. It can also damage healthy cells that divide quickly. Side effects occur when healthy cells are damaged.

Not everyone has side effects and each person's experience may differ. Side effects and their severity are not representative of the treatment's effect or lack thereof.

This document presents the most frequent side effects that your treatment causes.

Medication

Chlorambucil

Tablets to take by mouth

Administration

Take once daily, on days : _____

On empty stomach : either 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal

Total daily dose : _____ 2 mg tablets

Cycle : treatment repeated every 28 days



A **blood test** will be done prior to every treatment cycle. Depending on the results and side effects of the previous treatment, the dose of the medication might be adjusted or the treatment might be delayed.

How to take your medication?

- Take your chlorambucil tablets, as prescribed, once daily, on days : _____. You should take your tablets with a full glass of water on an empty stomach either 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal.
- Tablets must be taken whole. Do not chew, split or crush the tablets.
- **If you forget a dose**, you may take it as soon as you remember but do not double your next dose. Try, however, to take your pills at the same time every day and in the same way (on an empty stomach).

Storing and handling your medicines



- Wash your hands immediately after handling your tablets.
- Keep your medication in the **fridge**, out of reach of children and pets.
- Don't throw away unused medication at home. Bring it back to your pharmacy to be destroyed safely. You may dispose of the empty containers in your home garbage can.
- Pour the pills from the container into the cap to avoid contact with other surfaces. If it inadvertently comes in contact with the surrounding surface, wash and rub the surface with water and soap.
- Caregivers should wear disposable gloves if they prepare medication for you. You can find disposable gloves at your local community pharmacy.
- Keep your medications in their original container and do not mix them with other drugs. The container should never be reused to put other objects or food.

How can this treatment affect your daily life?

Fatigue and appetite



- You may experience **fatigue** during your treatments. This is usually 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 *finer herbes* or lemon juice. Eating fruits and unsweetened candies, chewing non-sugared gums, etc., may mask the metallic taste.
- **Alcohol** in small quantities is allowed and will not affect the efficacy of the treatments.



Sex life and birth control



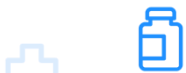
- You can have an **active sexual** life during your treatments. However, a decrease in your sexual drive may occur during this period. This may also be influenced by different factors (fatigue, stress, etc.).
- It's safe to kiss, to touch, to hold hands, to sleep in the same bed and to cuddle.
- For **male patients**, the production of spermatozoids may be reduced or completely absent during treatments. 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 and a pregnancy remains possible.
- The treatment may affect the sperm and it may be harmful to the embryo.
 - If you have sex with a woman of child-bearing age, a birth control method is strongly recommended during treatments.
 - Notify your doctor immediately if you had unprotected sex and your partner is pregnant.
- In **pre-menopausal female patients** chemotherapy may cause the menstrual cycle to be irregular or stop completely 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 treatments.
 - Breast-feeding is not recommended during treatment.

Tips and precautions



- **Sit down to urinate and fold down the toilet lid**
Women as well as men should sit down to urinate and fold down the toilet lid before flushing in order to avoid splashing. Flush twice to make sure everything has been flushed away. Follow these precautions during your treatments (or according to instructions from your cancer center).
- **Bodily fluids**
The treatment you're receiving stays in your body for a few days. During that period, it's possible that a certain quantity is found in some bodily fluids or secretions that you produce, such as urine, stools, vomit, sperm and vaginal discharge. In order to protect the environment and those living with you, follow the instructions given by your cancer center about the right way to handle and dispose of the bodily fluids.
- **Over the counter medicines, natural health products and vaccines**
Consult your healthcare team:
 - if you intend to take any other medication (with or without a prescription) or natural health products.
 - if you need to receive a vaccine.

This could decrease your treatment's efficacy or increase its side effects.
- **Always have on hand the complete list of your medications**
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.

- **Drink plenty of fluids**

It is very important to drink plenty of fluids during your treatment, especially during the first few cycles. Furthermore, you could be prescribed a medication (allopurinol) to decrease the risk of problems related to the rapid destruction of abnormal cells and to protect your kidneys.



What are the side effects of your treatment?

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.

ADVERSE EFFECTS

MANAGEMENT

Decrease in white blood cells

A decrease in **white blood cells** will occur about 1 to 2 weeks following the 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 (chills, cough, sore throat, pain while urinating, etc.)
 - If you have a fever, do not take acetaminophen (Ex: Tylenol®, Atasol®) and anti-inflammatory medication (Ex: Motrin®, Advil®, Aleve®, etc.).
- ➔ **Stop your treatment and go to the Emergency Room if:**
- you have a fever of 38,3 °C (101°F) or above
 - or
 - you have a fever of 38 °C (100,4 °F) twice an hour apart.

Decrease in platelets

A decrease in platelets may occur during treatment. You may bruise or tend to bleed more easily than you normally do.

- Use a tooth brush with soft bristles
- Consult your pharmacist before taking over the counter medications containing Aspirin® or other anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Advil®, Motrin®, Aleve®, etc.).
- 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.

Nausea

Rarely, slight nausea may occur the same day or the day following your treatment.

- You may be prescribed medication to prevent nausea if needed.
- Contact a member of your healthcare team if you have nausea that bothers you.

Hair loss

Usually there is **no hair loss** with this treatment.

RARES ADVERSE EFFETS THAT CAN BE SEVERE OR SERIOUS

If you experience any of the following symptoms, stop your treatment and quickly contact a member of your healthcare team or go immediately to the Emergency Room :

- If you have persistent **cough** and/or **fever** as well as sudden **shortness of breath**
- Allergic reactions (swelling of the mouth or throat, shortness of breath, skin rash, hives, elevated heart rate)
- Seizure or loss of consciousness

PHARMACIST : _____

PHONE : _____

FROM ____ H____ TO ____ H____ (MONDAY TO FRIDAY)

This fact sheet has been prepared by a sub-committee of the Comité national de l'évolution de la pratique des soins pharmaceutiques of the Programme québécois de cancérologie of the Ministry of Health and Social Services in consultation with the Comité de l'évolution de la pratique en oncologie of the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux.

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