

Fludarabine

Fludara®

Chemotherapy in 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

Fludarabine

Tablets to take by mouth

Administration

To be taken once a day for 5 days (Days 1, 2, 3 ,4 ,5)

To be taken with or without food

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 fludarabine tablets as prescribed once a day, at the same time everyday for 5 days. You may take your pills before or during your meal with a large glass of water or juice. If you have difficulty tolerating it, for example, if it causes a stomach ache, take it while you eat.
- 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 (either with or without food).

Storing and handling your medicines



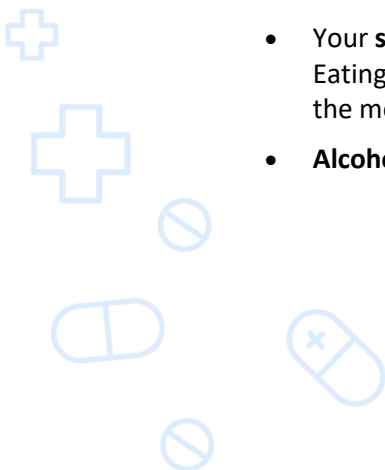
- Wash your hands immediately after handling your tablets.
- Keep your medication at room temperature, out of the reach of children and pets as well as protected from light, heat or moisture. Do not keep medicines in the bathroom.
- Don't throw away unused medication at home. Bring it back to your pharmacy to be destroyed safely. You may dispose of the empty containers in your home garbage can.
- If your medication 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.

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 *fines 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 spermatozooids 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 and up to 6 months after the end of treatment.
 - 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 and up to 6 months after the end of treatment.
 - 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 and up to 48 hours after (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 you 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

Fever and chills

Fever and chills may occur a few hours following your treatment and should not last more than 48 hours.

- If these symptoms bother you, your doctor or pharmacist may recommend a fever reliever such as acetaminophen (Ex: Tylenol®, Atasol®).
- Fever which occurs more than 48 hours after treatment may be the sign of an infection. Consult a member of your healthcare team immediately or head to the Emergency Room (see the following box: Decrease in white blood cells).

Decrease in white blood cells

A decrease in **white blood cells** will occur about 2 weeks following 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.).
- You could be prescribed a medication against viruses to decrease the risk of developing an infection.
- **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.



ADVERSE EFFECTS

MANAGEMENT

Diarrhea

Diarrhea (loose, watery stools) can sometimes start around 5 to 8 days after starting treatment. This effect may persist for a few days after stopping treatment.

- Drink lots of liquids (8 to 10 glasses a day) unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- Eat and drink often but in small quantities.
- Contact a member of your healthcare team if you have significant diarrhea (more than 3 loose stools per day) for more than 24 hours.
- If you have with diarrhea with fever, contact a member of your health care team immediately or go to the Emergency Room.

Nausea

Usually mild heartache can occur especially on treatment days and last 1 to 2 days after the last day of your treatment.

- 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.
- Contact a member of your healthcare team if your medication does not relieve your nausea.
- ✔ **Continue your treatment if:** you have light nausea that does not prevent you entirely from eating. Make sure to continue your medication prescribed for your nausea.
- ⚠ **Continue your treatment and call your healthcare team as soon as possible if:** you have significant nausea, experience vomiting that is partially preventing you from eating. Make sure to continue your medication prescribed for your nausea.
- ✖ **Stop your treatment and call your healthcare team as quickly as possible or go to the Emergency Room if:** you have severe nausea or repeated vomiting that prevents you completely from eating.

Decrease in platelets

A decrease in platelets may occur after the start of treatment. You may bruise or tend to bleed more easily than usual.

- 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.

Hair loss

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

RARE ADVERSE EFFECTS THAT CAN BE SEVERE OR SERIOUS

If the following side effects occur, stop your treatment and call your healthcare team as quickly as possible or go to the Emergency Room:

- Cough and/or persistent fever with sudden difficulty breathing
- Confusion, blurred vision, drowsiness, agitation, seizures

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.




DEVELOPED JUNE 2005 | REVISED FEBRUARY 2020







Treatment Diary | Fludarabine 5 days

CYCLE START DATE :

LEGEND

-  Continue your treatment.
-  Continue your treatment and contact your healthcare team as soon as possible.
-  Stop your treatment and contact your healthcare team without delay or go to the Emergency Room.

Refer to the information sheet for more details.

		CYCLE DAYS																											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
(Record the dose taken) mg																													
Date (dd-mm)																													
NAUSEA AND VOMITING		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	Light nausea that does not prevent you entirely from eating.																												
	Significant nausea or if you experience vomiting that is partially preventing you from eating.																												
	Severe nausea or repeated vomiting that prevents you completely from eating.																												
DECREASE IN WHITE BLOOD CELLS		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	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 with or without symptoms of infection.																												