

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 (Adjuvant treatment of pancreatic cancer)

Date : April 2016

Revision :

Medication	Administration
Gemcitabine	Intravenous infusion over 30 minutes on days 1, 8, 15
<i>Cycle is repeated every 4 weeks for a total of 6 cycles</i>	

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General Information associated with your treatment

- › Gemcitabine is used to prevent the multiplication of abnormal cells and destroy them.
- › A **blood test** will be done regularly during your treatment. 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.
- › 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 *finer 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.)
- › 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 and up to 3 months after the end of treatment.
- › In **pre-menopausal female patients**, gemcitabine 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 gemcitabine administered during pregnancy may harm the embryo. Two simultaneous birth control methods are strongly recommended during treatment and up to 3 months after the end of treatment. 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 health products. 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 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 your doctor or pharmacist 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 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 sprays, dyes and perms.
A decrease in the white blood cells will occur 7 to 10 days following treatment. You may be at higher risk to contact infections during this period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Wash your hands often.› During this period, avoid coming in contact with people who have contagious diseases.› Quickly contact a member of your healthcare team 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 platelets will occur 7 to 10 days following treatment. You may 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.› Consult us 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 experience a decrease of red blood cells following your treatment. This is called anemia and is characterized by signs of fatigue, pale colour, 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 us.
Flu-like symptoms may occur shortly after your treatment. You may experience mild to moderate symptoms consisting mainly of fever but also chills, headache, muscle or bone pain. These symptoms last only a few hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› If these symptoms bother you, your doctor or pharmacist may recommend a pain killer such as acetaminophen (Tylenol[®], Atasol[®]).› If you experience fever and chills more than 48 hours after your treatment, you may have an infection. Notify your doctor immediately or go to the Emergency Room.
Water retention may occur and manifest itself by hands, ankles, feet swelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Keep your feet up while sitting.› Avoid wearing tight clothes or shoes.› Notify your physician if you experience rapid weight gain, shortness of breath or if you feel swollen.
A skin rash , usually mild, may occur following your treatment. It generally involves the trunk, the arms and legs and might be associated with itchiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Consult your pharmacist or your doctor who will recommend appropriate measures.

Pharmacist: _____

Phone: _____

from ____ h to ____ h (Monday to Friday)