

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 Patients Gemcitabine-Docetaxel

Date : *May 2014*

Revision: *November 2016*

Medication	Administration
Gemcitabine	Intravenous infusion over 90 minutes on days 1 and 8.
Docetaxel	Intravenous infusion over 60 minutes on day 8.
<i>Cycle repeated every 3 weeks</i>	

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General Information associated with your treatment

- › These medications are used to prevent the multiplication of abnormal cells and destroy them.
- › A **blood test** will be done prior to every treatment. Depending on its results and side effects of the previous treatment, the dose of medication might be adjusted or treatment might be delayed.
- › Your **appetite may diminish**. Eat more often, in smaller quantities.
- › Your **sense of taste may be altered**. Enhance foods with herbs 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. It 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.
- › 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.
- › Consult your doctor or pharmacist before you take other medications (even over the counter medications available without a prescription), 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.

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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.› Contact a member of your healthcare team if your medication doesn't relieve your nausea.
Usually, a total hair loss will occur. In general this may happen 3 to 4 weeks following treatment. However, don't worry; your hair should grow back after treatments have ended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Use a gentle shampoo.
A decrease in the white blood cells will occur about 1 to 2 weeks following 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.› 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[®], Aleve[®]).
A decrease in platelets will occur about 1 week following 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.

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You may experience a decrease in red blood cells following your treatment. This phenomenon is called anemia and is characterized 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.
You may experience fatigue during your treatments. This is usually only temporary and may be related to different reasons (medication, stress, the disease).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Maintain a good level of activity but rest when you feel the need to.
You may experience allergic reactions during your treatment with docetaxel such as cutaneous eruptions, redness, itchiness, swelling or shortness of breath. These reactions are more frequent during the first few minutes of the infusion and more common during the first 2 infusions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Dexamethasone will be prescribed to prevent this reaction. Some other drugs may be prescribed, if necessary.› Notify the nurse immediately if you have difficulty breathing or if you experience swelling of the tongue or throat during treatment.
You may experience muscle and bone pain that may occur a few days following your treatment. These symptoms usually last for 4 to 7 days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› If this occurs, speak to a member of your healthcare team who will recommend analgesics.
Leg weakness, numbness or tingling of hand and feet may occur. These symptoms usually increase with the number of treatments given.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› If you experience these symptoms, speak to a member of your healthcare team at your next visit.
A skin rash , usually mild, may occur following your treatment with gemcitabine. It generally involves the trunk, the arms and legs and might be associated with itchiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Consult a member of your healthcare team who will recommend appropriate measures.
Flu-like symptoms 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. These symptoms usually 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. Consult immediately a member of your healthcare team or go to the Emergency Room.

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Gradual fluid retention may occur with consecutive treatments and may present itself by swelling of the feet and hands, shortness of breath or rapid weight gain.	› Dexamethasone will be prescribed to prevent this reaction. › Notify your doctor if you are gaining weight rapidly, if you experience some swelling or if you are easily short of breath.
Nails changes may occur.	› To prevent nails changes, soak them into ice during the infusion of docetaxel or wear cold gloves if they are available at your cancer clinic. › At your next visit, notify a member of your healthcare team if nails changes occur.
Pain, irritation, swelling or a burning sensation at the injection site may occur during treatment with docetaxel.	› Immediately advise your nurse if you experience this malaise during infusion.
Rare adverse effects that can be severe or serious to communicate quickly to your doctor	
If you experience a cough or persistent fever with sudden difficulty breathing .	› Consult immediately a member of your healthcare team or go to the Emergency Room.

Pharmacist : _____

Phone: _____

From _____ AM to _____ PM (Monday to Friday)