

Oral cyclophosphamide in ovarian cancer

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people chemotherapy may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. Your doctor will explain to you whether you will receive chemotherapy or another type of treatment, or a combination of both. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment. You will find it useful to refer to the booklet 'Chemotherapy, a guide' which gives general information on chemotherapy and side effects.

Your treatment

Your doctor has prescribed for you a treatment which includes the chemotherapy cyclophosphamide. This is taken as a tablet.

You should take one 50mg tablet a day until your doctor tells you to stop.

Cyclophosphamide can **uncommonly** cause irritation of the bladder (cystitis). We recommend that you take another medication called Mesna to prevent this when necessary. This is taken as a tablet about 30 minutes before the cyclophosphamide.

You will have a routine blood test once a month to monitor the effects of the chemotherapy.

This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report side effects straight away. Don't delay, if you feel unwell, please ring The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658. The lines are open 24 hours a day.



Increased risk of serious infection:

You are vulnerable to infection while you are having chemotherapy. Minor infections can become life-threatening in a matter of hours if left untreated. Symptoms of infection include fever, shivering, sweats, sore throat, diarrhoea, discomfort when you pass urine, cough or breathlessness. We recommend that you use a digital thermometer so you can check your temperature. You can buy one from your local chemist.

If you feel unwell, you have symptoms of an infection or your temperature is 37.5°C or above, or below 36°C contact The Christie Hotline straight away.

Possible side effects

Chemotherapy can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all the side effects. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life-threatening. It is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so they can be monitored and, where possible, treated.

Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

- **Anaemia (low number of red blood cells)**

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Let your doctor or nurse know if these symptoms are a problem. You may need a blood transfusion.

- **Mild nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

You may notice some mild sickness while taking the cyclophosphamide. You will be given some anti-sickness tablets to take at home if you need to. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or this hospital, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

- **Lethargy**

Some chemotherapy may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. It can be frustrating when you feel unable to cope with routine tasks. If you do feel tired, take rest and get help with household chores. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

- **Loss of appetite**

A dietitian or specialist nurse at can give you advice and tips on diet and how to improve your appetite.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)



- **Allergic reactions**

Allergic reactions to this chemotherapy are uncommon, but please get medical help if you notice any of the following after taking the cyclophosphamide tablets: fevers and chills, back pain, shortness of breath, headaches and swelling of the face. Your doctor may prescribe medication that can help to reduce these side effects, if necessary.



- **Bladder irritation (cystitis)**

Cyclophosphamide can cause irritation of the bladder lining. This is normally prevented by taking a tablet of Mesna alongside the cyclophosphamide. You should also try to drink plenty of fluids whilst on this treatment. However, if you notice blood in your urine or burning pain on passing urine, you should stop taking the cyclophosphamide tablets and contact The Christie Hotline immediately for further advice. Mesna tablets can interfere with urine test results, so please tell the doctor that you are on Mesna if you are having a urine test.



- **Bruising or bleeding**

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Let your doctor know if you have any unexplained bruising or bleeding, such as nosebleeds, bloodspots or rashes on the skin, and bleeding gums. You may need a platelet transfusion.

- **Hair thinning**

Some hair loss may occur during treatment, including body and facial hair. It is advisable to avoid perms, colours, use of hot brushes and vigorous frequent washing that could increase hair loss. Please remember that this is a temporary side effect and your hair will grow back when your treatment is completed. Very rarely, hair loss may be permanent. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you by visiting the cancer information centre. It is a good idea to get your wig before you lose a lot of hair which you can then match to your natural colour. Ask the staff for a copy of the 'Wig fitting service at The Christie'.

The Maggie's Centre runs a Talking Heads hair loss support workshop for anyone who is anticipating or experiencing hair loss (both men and women). These sessions cover the practicalities of hair loss as well as offering support with its emotional impact. Contact Maggie's on **0161 641 4848** or email **manchester@maggiescentres.org**

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Sore mouth**

Your mouth may become sore or dry, or you may notice small mouth ulcers during this treatment. Drinking plenty of fluids and cleaning your teeth regularly and gently with a soft toothbrush can help to reduce the risk of this happening. We can prescribe a mouthwash for you to use during treatment. You can dilute this with water if your mouth is sore. Ask your doctor or nurse for further advice. There is also general mouth care information in the chemotherapy booklet. If you continue to have a sore mouth, please contact The Christie Hotline.

- **Diarrhoea**

You may have mild diarrhoea and anti-diarrhoea tablets may help. However, if you develop severe diarrhoea (more than four times a day) it is important to contact The Christie Hotline straight away for advice as this may be a sign of a serious infection.

- **Changes in lung tissue**

Very rarely, cyclophosphamide can cause fibrosis (scarring) in the lungs. If you start to feel short of breath or develop a cough please stop taking your cyclophosphamide and contact The Christie Hotline immediately.

- **Changes in the way your heart works**

Cyclophosphamide can rarely affect how the heart works. However, it is very rare for the heart to be affected by the doses of treatment you will be receiving.

- **Nail changes**

Your nails may become darker or ridged. These changes grow out over a few months once the treatment has finished.

- **Skin changes**

Your skin may darken, due to excess production of pigment, but this is rare.

Serious and potentially life threatening side effects

In a small proportion of patients chemotherapy can result in very severe side effects which may rarely result in death. The team caring for you will discuss the risk of these side effects with you.

Sex, contraception & fertility

Protecting your partner and contraception: We recommend that you or your partner use a condom during sexual intercourse while you are having the course of chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any chemotherapy drugs that may be present in semen and in the vagina. If you suspect that you may be pregnant please tell your doctor immediately.

Fertility: This chemotherapy may affect your ability to have children. Your doctor or nurse should have discussed this with you. If not, please ask them before you start treatment.

Loss of periods: Due to the effects of chemotherapy on the ovaries you may find that your periods become irregular or may eventually stop. In younger women this may be temporary, but if you are closer to your menopause it may be permanent. This will result in hot flushes, sweats and vaginal dryness.

Late side effects

Some side effects may become evident only after a number of years. In reaching any decision with you about treatment, the potential benefit you receive from treatment will be weighed against the risks of serious long term side effects to the heart, lungs, kidneys and bone marrow. With some drugs there is also a small but definite risk of developing another cancer. If any of these problems specifically applies to you, the doctor will discuss these with you and note this on your consent form.

Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

- Administration enquiries **0161 918 7606/7610**
- Chemotherapy nurse: **0161 918 7171**
- Clinical trials unit **0161 918 7663**

For advice ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours)

Your consultant is:

Your hospital number is:

Your key worker is:

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most **up-to-date** scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

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For information about The Christie and our services, please visit www.christie.nhs.uk or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice

**The Christie Hotline:
0161 446 3658**

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

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