

Lenalidomide (lymphoma)

The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people it may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. 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 or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a tablet treatment for your lymphoma called lenalidomide.

Lenalidomide belongs to a group of drugs called immuno-modulatory agents. The tablet is taken daily for 21 days with a 7 day rest period (28 day cycle). It is important to drink plenty of fluids when taking this tablet as it can affect kidney function.

You will have a routine blood test and medical review before the start of each cycle of treatment. This is so your team can monitor and manage any side effects as well as assess your response to treatment. Occasionally we may not be able to go ahead with your treatment until your blood counts are back to a safe level. If this happens, your chemotherapy may be delayed a week.

- **If you are taking any other medicines:** It is important to tell the doctor if you are taking medicine for any other condition. Some medicines can react with your treatment. So always tell your doctor at every visit about any other medicines or tablets you are taking.

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.

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.



Tumour lysis syndrome

This treatment may cause the rapid breakdown of lymphoma cells which may lead to abnormalities in the blood. This problem is more likely if you have a lot of disease or if your kidneys do not work as well as they should do. Your doctor will tell you if you are at risk. You may be given a kidney-protective medicine called allopurinol for the first cycle of treatment, and your doctor may do additional blood tests to monitor this side effect. We sometimes admit patients for the first treatment to give intravenous fluids and kidney-protective medication and twice daily monitoring of blood tests for 48 hours.

Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

• 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 to 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.

• 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.

• 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.

• Blood clots/thrombosis

This treatment can increase the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE). You are likely to be prescribed an anti-clotting agent such as aspirin or dalteparin (fragmin) injection to prevent blood clots from forming. Please report immediately to your doctor or nurse if you develop a red and swollen leg or sudden onset of shortness of breath.

• Nervous system disorders including peripheral neuropathy (tingling and numbness in toes or fingers)

Lenalidomide can cause nerve damage. This causes numbness or pins and needles in your fingers or toes, and muscle cramps and weakness in the legs. **It is important to tell us if this happens as the dose of lenalidomide may have to be reduced or stopped.** This is usually mild or temporary, but can last for some time. However, it can become permanent, so please report these symptoms promptly to your doctor or nurse specialist.

• Balance

Your balance may be affected or you may feel dizzy or feel faint. Let your medical team know if you experience any of these symptoms.

• Fatigue

Fatigue is quite common whilst receiving lenalidomide. The fatigue may be a result of anaemia (a low red blood cell count) which can be managed with blood transfusions. It can also be managed through rest, good diet, drinking plenty of fluids and regular gentle exercise.

• Shortness of breath

If you experience any shortness of breath, please report this symptom to your doctor or nurse.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Gastrointestinal disturbance**

This treatment can cause constipation, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, or an increase or decrease in appetite or weight. Please report this to your nurse or doctor if you have any of these symptoms. You may be given medication to help with any of these side effects.

If you experience abdominal pain with nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea, or notice fresh blood in your stool or your stool is black in colour, contact The Hotline without delay.

- **Changes to vision or hearing**

This treatment may cause changes to your vision or reduced hearing/tinnitus. Let your doctor or nurse know if you experience any of these symptoms.

- **Muscle spasm/bone pain**

This treatment may cause muscle spasm or bone pain. Let your doctor or nurse know if you experience any of these symptoms.

- **Dry skin or rash**

You may develop dry skin. This can be easily treated with an unperfumed moisturising cream. You may also develop a skin rash. Please tell your doctor or nurse if this occurs.

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 and fertility (Warning!)

Lenalidomide is a known teratogen that may cause severe life-threatening birth defects. **You must not become pregnant or father a child while taking lenalidomide.** To ensure that an unborn baby is not exposed to lenalidomide, your doctor will complete an Authorisation Form with each prescription. The form documents that you have given consent for lenalidomide treatment and have been told about the risks to an unborn baby and the precautions you must take.

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 lenalidomide. Lenalidomide is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any lenalidomide that may be present in semen and in the vagina. If you suspect that you may be pregnant please tell your doctor immediately.

Erectile dysfunction:

Your doctor or nurse can provide support and advice if you experience this symptom.

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:

Haematology day unit - **0161 446 3924**

Lymphoma clinical nurse specialists - **0161 446 9573**

Lymphoma secretaries -

0161 446 3753 - Professor Radford/Dr Linton/Dr Phillips/Dr Broadbent

0161 446 8574 - Professor Illidge

0161 446 3333 - Dr Hague/Dr Chan

0161 446 3302 - Dr Harris

0161 446 3869 - Professor Bloor

Palatine treatment ward - **0161 446 3925**

General enquiries - **0161 446 3000**

Your consultant is:

Your hospital number is:

Your key worker is:

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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.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



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