



PCV

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. Chemotherapy is the most commonly prescribed anti-cancer treatment but other types of treatment are also used. 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 a course of treatment with PCV chemotherapy. The treatment consists of the following:

- Day 1** Vincristine by short infusion (into a vein)
- Day 1** CCNU (Lomustine) – single dose of capsules taken together for one day only
- Days 1-10** Procarbazine – capsules taken together once a day for 10 days

This treatment is repeated every 6 weeks, usually for a total of 6 cycles.

You will have a routine blood test and be reviewed in clinic by a member of the neuro-oncology team before the start of each cycle of treatment.

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.

- **Extravasation** is when chemotherapy leaks outside the vein. If you develop redness, soreness or pain at the injection site **at any time** please let us know 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)



- **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.

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. You will be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home, and it may be helpful to take an anti-sickness tablet around 30 minutes *before* your procarbazine tablets each day. If you continue to feel sick or you are vomiting, contact your GP or this hospital, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased. If you find that you are losing your appetite, please speak to your nurse or doctor.

- **Lethargy**

PCV 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. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

- **Constipation**

This may be quite troublesome, and you should try not to let constipation become too severe. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. You can also try simple laxatives such as lactulose which you can buy from a pharmacy, but make sure you tell your Christie doctor about this. Your Christie doctor or GP can prescribe stronger laxatives if necessary. (See Severe constipation and abdominal pains on page 3)

- **Tingling & numbness in the fingers or toes**

This is usually only mild and temporary. Very rarely it may become permanent. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

- **Headache**

Let your doctor know if you get headaches while you are on treatment.

- **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.

- **Flu-like symptoms**

Procarbazine may cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, aches and pains and shivering about 3 to 5 hours after it is given. These symptoms are temporary and should go within 12 to 24 hours. You can take paracetamol which should help. If your symptoms are particularly severe, tell your doctor on your next visit.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Hair thinning**

Total hair loss is uncommon, but your hair may thin. If this happens, it usually begins 3 to 4 weeks after starting treatment, although it may occur earlier. It is temporary and your hair will start to re-grow once the treatment is finished. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, we can arrange this for you. Ask staff for a copy of the 'The Wig Fitting Service' leaflet.

- **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.

- **Liver problems**

This treatment can occasionally cause abnormal liver blood tests and jaundice. This is rarely very severe, but your liver function will be monitored every time you come to the clinic for your treatment.

- **Jaw pain**

Some patients may also develop jaw pain caused by vincristine. This usually settles within 2 to 3 days and can be treated with simple painkillers like paracetamol. Using a mouthwash such as Difflam or Chlorhexidine is also helpful. If your symptoms are particularly severe, please tell your doctor on your next visit.

- **Rash**

Procarbazine may cause an itchy rash. If this happens, stop taking your capsules and let your hospital doctor know.

- **Severe constipation and abdominal pains**

Vincristine can sometimes cause severe constipation, possibly with abdominal pains, a few days after the infusion. Take laxatives as soon as you get any symptoms, particularly if you have vomited or not opened your bowels for more than 2 days. Contact your GP or The Christie Hotline for further advice.

Foods to be avoided on this regimen

Certain foods and drinks contain a substance called tyramine. Eating food or taking drinks high in tyramine may cause an unpleasant reaction (a throbbing headache, pounding heart, flushing, sweating) if consumed whilst you are taking procarbazine, and for up to one or 2 days after you finish taking it. These foods include: mature cheeses (including processed cheese, but cottage cheese and cream cheese are safe), yeast or meat extracts (Marmite, Oxo, Bovril), broad bean pods, pickled herring, salami sausage, flavoured textured vegetable protein, over-ripe fruit, alcoholic drinks (especially heavy red wines such as Chianti), non-alcoholic beers, lagers and wines, other foods that are not fresh, particularly if they have been fermented, pickled, smoked, "hung" (game), or "matured", miso soup and large amounts of soy sauce. Check with your pharmacist, dietitian, nurse or doctor if you are unsure about any foods.

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Alcohol must be avoided whilst taking procarbazine and for 48 hours after finishing the procarbazine.

Medicines to be avoided on this regimen

Certain medicines including herbal medicines and some cough and cold remedies need to be avoided. Please ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice about any other medication you are taking. Steroids (dexamethasone), stomach-protecting drugs, anti-epileptic drugs and painkillers are not affected.

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.

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:



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Details of the sources used are available, please contact Patient.Information@christie.nhs.uk