



# Herceptin<sup>®</sup> (Trastuzumab) in metastatic breast cancer

Herceptin<sup>®</sup> uses a targeted approach to treat breast cancer involving monoclonal antibodies. This type of treatment targets specific areas on cancer cells in the body. Herceptin<sup>®</sup> (trastuzumab) is one of the first of this class of treatments to be approved for clinical use.

Herceptin<sup>®</sup> is only effective when the breast cancer cells have more HER2 protein than normal, and this is classified as HER2 positive. About 1 person in 5 with breast cancer is HER2 positive. A test is carried out to identify this protein.

A test will have been carried out on your breast cancer following surgery. This will provide the essential first step to identify your HER2 status before you and your doctor decide the treatment that is best for you.

## Your treatment

Herceptin<sup>®</sup> is given as a subcutaneous injection just below the skin surface of your thigh over a period of 3-5 minutes.

Recommendation is to alternate thighs with each cycle.

Cycle 1 is given over 3-5 minutes followed by a 6 hour observational period.

Cycle 2 is given over 3-5 minutes followed by a 2 hour observational period.

Cycle 3 onwards is given over 3-5 minutes.

Each cycle will be prescribed at the same dose, 600mg.

Herceptin<sup>®</sup> treatments will be given weekly or 3-weekly and will continue for as long as it is beneficial to you.

You do not need a routine blood test for Herceptin<sup>®</sup> treatment.

You will need to have a heart scan, echocardiogram or MUGA before starting Herceptin<sup>®</sup> treatment and at 3 to 6 monthly intervals as advised by your medical team.

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

This treatment 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)

- **Flu like symptoms**

Occasionally you may experience chills, fever or rhinitis (runny nose) one or two days after treatment. These symptoms can be reduced or controlled by taking medication such as paracetamol. If you are receiving Herceptin<sup>®</sup> with chemotherapy, please monitor your temperature and contact the hospital if your temperature is 37.5°C or above or below 36°C or if you experience any symptoms of an infection.

- **Reactions**

Less commonly, people may experience an allergic reaction with the first or second cycle. This may involve a headache, dizziness, rash or breathlessness. If any of these symptoms occur, call your nurse immediately. These symptoms are usually mild and temporary.

- **Injection site**

You may experience discomfort, including mild stinging, bruising or redness in the injection area. This is usually mild and temporary.

- **Joint and muscle pain**

Aches and pains can be experienced in the joints (arthralgia) and muscles (myalgia) during and post herceptin. The severity of this varies from person to person. It is important to inform the hospital and then appropriate painkillers can be prescribed.



- **Diarrhoea**

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, contact The Christie Hotline for advice. **If you develop severe diarrhoea it is important to contact this hospital straightaway as this may be a sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!**

- **Lethargy**

Herceptin can have an effect on energy levels and you may experience insomnia. This can be very frustrating and you may benefit from additional support and advice at this time. Complementary therapies may be helpful. Speak to the Herceptin team for further information. Gentle exercise such as walking, can be beneficial.

## Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Effects on the heart**

Herceptin<sup>®</sup> can sometimes affect your heart function. We will assess your heart function by a MUGA scan or echocardiogram before you start your treatment and this will be repeated at 3-6 month intervals. If you experience any unusual shortness of breath, swelling of your ankles or a rapid heartbeat, please contact the hospital immediately.

- **Pneumonitis (breathlessness)**

Some patients may experience a feeling of breathlessness, or develop a cough. If this happens please tell your doctor or contact The Christie so that investigations and treatment can be undertaken.

## Late side effects

Long term possible side effects of treatment with Herceptin<sup>®</sup> are not yet completely known. The doctor can discuss any concerns you may have.

## Contraception

We recommend that you use a form of contraception to avoid pregnancy throughout Herceptin<sup>®</sup> treatment and up to 6 months after your last dose of Herceptin<sup>®</sup>. If you suspect you may be pregnant please contact the hospital immediately.

## Contacts

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

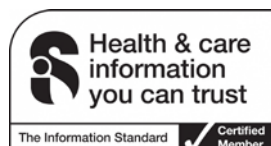
- Administration enquiries                      0161 918 7606/7610
- Chemotherapy nurse:                            0161 918 7171
- Clinical trials unit                                0161 918 7663
- Breast care nurses                                0161 446 3996

For urgent 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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