



# Temozolomide (Oral)

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 Temozolomide.

Temozolomide is given by mouth as capsules either once a day for 5 days, or at a lower dose over 21 days. The course is repeated every 28 days (4 weeks), usually for 6 or 12 cycles (months).

Your total daily Temozolomide dose may be made up of several Temozolomide tablets of different strengths. If you are unsure about how to take your tablets, please ask your pharmacist or a member of the team treating you.

Temozolomide should be taken on an empty stomach. We recommend that you do not to eat for 1 to 2 hours before taking the Temozolomide and for 1 to 2 hours afterwards.

You will have a routine blood test and be reviewed in clinic by a member of the medical 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.**

## 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)



- **Prone to bleeding**

Temozolomide can often affect the platelet count. Platelets are the part of the blood which helps blood to clot, so you may have nose bleeds, bruising or bleeding, for example, from the gums. Sometimes you may need platelet transfusions.

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. You will be given anti-sickness tablets to take home, and it is helpful to take an anti-sickness tablet around 30 minutes before your temozolomide tablets each day. 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.

- **Rash**

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

- **Lethargy**

Temozolomide chemotherapy may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. 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.

- **Headache**

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

- **Constipation**

You may become constipated during this treatment. 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.

- **Diarrhoea**

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, anti-diarrhoea medication can be prescribed by your GP for a temporary period until this is resolved. If this problem persists contact this hospital. You may have mild diarrhoea and anti-diarrhoea tablets may help.

- **Loss of appetite**

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, ask staff for a copy of the booklet 'Eating – Help Yourself'.

- **Hair loss**

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 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 leaflet 'The Wig Fitting Service'.

### **Uncommon side effects (less 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.

- **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.

- **Severe and ongoing bone marrow suppression**

While some reduction in the numbers of white blood cells (infection fighting cells), red blood cells and platelets occurs in almost everyone receiving this treatment, this can occasionally be more severe and long-lasting, and could prevent the continuation of chemotherapy. Your doctor can discuss this with you.

### **Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)**

- **Kidney problems**

Temozolomide rarely affects kidney function. Your kidney function will be monitored every time you come to the clinic for your treatment.

- **Severe chest infection**

Temozolomide chemotherapy can make you more prone to particular types of chest infection. If you develop a cough associated with shortness of breath, contact The Christie Hotline or your GP.

### **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:

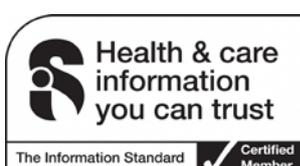
- Administration enquiries                      0161 918 7606/7610
- Chemotherapy nurse:                            0161 918 7171
- Clinical trials unit                                0161 918 7663

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](mailto:Patient.Information@christie.nhs.uk)