

# Cisplatin and Capecitabine

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 or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a treatment with cisplatin and capecitabine. The treatment consists of the following:

**Day 1** Cisplatin by drip over                      hours. Given with plenty of fluid.

**Days 1 to 14** Capecitabine tablets by mouth.  
Take the tablets twice a day with water, within half an hour of food.

**Days 15 to 20** No chemotherapy

**Day 21** Restart with the next cycle.

You will have a routine blood test before the start of each cycle of 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.

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.**



- **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.

You will have a routine blood test before each treatment to monitor the effects of the chemotherapy. Occasionally we may not be able to go ahead with your treatment until your blood cells are back to a safe level. In this case your chemotherapy will usually be put back a week.



- **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.

## Other possible side effects

Chemotherapy can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everybody 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)

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given along with your chemotherapy to prevent this. You may also be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. **If you continue to feel or be sick, contact The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658 for advice.**



- **Kidney damage**

It is important to monitor how your kidneys are working while you are having treatment as the cisplatin can put a strain on them. Before you start the treatment you will need to have a test called a GFR. This is performed in the Nuclear Medicine Department and consists of an injection followed by series of blood tests. The GFR will be repeated before alternate cycles of the chemotherapy. Your routine blood tests will also give us an idea of how well your kidneys are working. It is important to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids (at least 8 cups or 4 pints per day) during your course of chemotherapy.



- **Diarrhoea**

This can be a side effect of capecitabine. It may also be a sign of serious infection. If the diarrhoea is mild, you can take a tablet (loperamide) from your Pharmacy or GP to stop it. **If the diarrhoea is severe or wakes you during the night, you must contact The Christie Hotline straight away on 0161 446 3658. Diarrhoea can lead to life-threatening dehydration.**

- **Constipation**

You may become constipated during this treatment. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Ask the staff for a copy of 'Eating: Help Yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment. You will be prescribed some laxatives but if these are not working, please tell us.



- **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.

- **Fatigue**

It is common to become tired and lacking in energy with this chemotherapy. You may feel you need to rest for a while during the day. You may need help with the household chores. It is a good idea to do some gentle exercise; even a walk round the block can help.

- **Metallic taste in the mouth**

You may have a strange or metallic taste in your mouth during treatment. Sucking a mint or other strongly flavoured sweet may help.

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

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

This is only usually mild and temporary but sometimes lasts for some time or becomes permanent. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

- **Tinnitus & high frequency hearing loss**

You may develop tinnitus (ringing in the ears). This sensation should subside when your treatment finishes but may be permanent. High frequency hearing loss can also occur with this chemotherapy. This may be permanent.

- **Sore hands and feet (palmar-plantar erythema):**

The skin on your hands and feet may become very dry, red and sore with some cracking. Cream and tablets can be given which can help. Use a moisturiser on your hands and feet. Your chemotherapy dose may need to change. Try to keep your hands and feet cool and if possible, uncovered. If the skin become very sore or starts to peel, please ring The Christie Hotline

- **Nail changes**

Your nails may become brittle and ridged. The skin on the sides of your nails may become red and sore.

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



- **Blood clots**

During chemotherapy you are more at risk of blood clots in the legs (DVT) or lungs (PE). Occasionally these clots can be life-threatening. To help prevent clots, keep mobile and drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.



- **Chest pain or stroke**

A small number of patients receiving 5-Fluorouracil (5FU) or capecitabine can experience chest pain (angina) or rarely have a heart attack. Extremely rarely this may lead to death. Other complications such as stroke or mini-stroke can happen but are exceptionally rare. If you develop any of these symptoms you should contact your hospital doctor for advice. In an emergency you should go immediately to your nearest accident and emergency department.



- **Severe skin reaction**

Very rarely you may develop a severe skin reaction. If you experience tender red skin patches which subsequently blister please **seek urgent medical advice**. The skin changes may be preceded by fever, chest symptoms and photophobia (a need to squint or close your eyes, which is worse in bright light). These symptoms may be caused by conditions called Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN) and Stevens Johnson Syndrome (SJS).

- **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**

- **Watery eyes**

Your eyes may also water often this will improve in time and needs no specific treatment. But if you have ongoing symptoms please discuss this with your doctor or nurse.

### **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 7665**
- 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](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

*©2018 The Christie NHS Foundation Trust. This document may be copied for use within the NHS only on the condition that The Christie NHS Foundation Trust is acknowledged as the creator.*

For information about The Christie and our services, please visit [www.christie.nhs.uk](http://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

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust  
Wilmslow Road  
Withington  
Manchester M20 4BX  
Tel: 0161 446 3000  
[www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk)

The Christie Patient Information Service  
November 2018 - Review July 2020



