



Herceptin[®] (Trastuzumab) in early breast cancer (adjuvant)

What is Herceptin?

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

Herceptin[®] 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[®] 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.

Herceptin[®] is given every 3 weeks for a total of 18 cycles (1 year).

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

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 to 18 is given over 3-5 minutes.

You do not need a routine blood test for Herceptin[®] treatment.

You will need to have a heart scan, echocardiogram or MUGA scan before you start Herceptin[®] treatment and then every 18 weeks to monitor any effects of the drug on your heart.

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.

Herceptin[®] team

Within The Christie, we have a designated team of one nurse clinician and a breast care nurse who manage the Herceptin[®] service and care of patients receiving adjuvant Herceptin[®]. This team will co-ordinate ongoing Herceptin[®] treatment either at home with a homecare delivery service or at the Outreach clinics at Oldham, Wigan, Salford, Bury, Leighton, Ashton, Stockport or the mobile chemotherapy unit.

Echocardiograms and clinic reviews with the Herceptin[®] team will be requested every 18 weeks to ensure accurate monitoring of cardiac function and toxicity assessment.

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[®] 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 usually with the first or second cycle. This may involve headache, dizziness, rash, nausea 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[®] 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 every 18 weeks. 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[®] are not yet completely known. The doctor can discuss any concerns you may have.

Contraception

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

Fertility

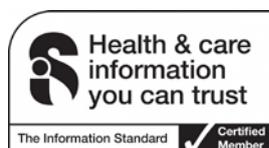
The treatment you have received may affect your ability to have children. Before trying to conceive it is important to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with a specialist doctor.

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
- Herceptin[®] team 0161 446 8502/8001/3996

For urgent advice ring The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658 (24 hours)



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