



Accelerated MVAC

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 or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a combination of chemotherapy including doxorubicin, vinblastine and methotrexate. We plan to give you chemotherapy treatment every 2 weeks (including an overnight stay in hospital) for 3 cycles.

Day 1 **Doxorubicin, vinblastine, methotrexate** are given slowly and directly into the vein via a drip with fluids, followed by **cisplatin** given directly into the vein via a drip over 16 hours.

Day 3 To support your immune system you will receive a single injection of pegfilgrastim underneath your skin. Your district nurse will give you this injection 2 to 3 days after you have started your chemotherapy (we will give you more details about this drug).

Day 7 Return to clinic for a blood test and review appointment.

Day 14 Restart with the next cycle (Day 1).

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)

- **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.

- **Lethargy**

Some 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. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

- **Hair loss**

Hair loss is usually total. The hair falls out gradually 10 to 14 days following your first course of treatment. The time scale varies from person to person. Please remember that this is a temporary side effect and your hair will grow back when your treatment is completed. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you. Ask the staff for a copy of the 'Wig Fitting Service'.



- **Kidney function**

Cisplatin can rarely cause long term damage to the kidneys. We will closely monitor your kidney function at each clinic visit.



- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication will be given along with your chemotherapy to prevent this. You will also be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. 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.

- **Red urine**

Doxorubicin because of its red colour may discolour your urine red for up to 24 hours following treatment. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about.

- **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.

- **Sensitivity to the sun**

Some chemotherapy can make your skin more sensitive to the sun than usual. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a high factor sunblock cream.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Allergic reaction**

Ask the staff for help if you notice any of the following:

- Some people have hot flushes when the drug is being given.
- Fevers and chills: back pain, shortness of breath, headaches and swelling of the face may occur during the time the drug is being given. If this happens please tell the staff straightaway. Your doctor may prescribe a drug that can help to reduce these side effects and, if necessary, we can give you this before your next treatment.

- **Upset bowels**

You may get upset bowels with this chemotherapy:

Diarrhoea. If this is a mild problem while you are having treatment, anti-diarrhoea tablets can be bought from a pharmacy or prescribed by your GP for a temporary period until this is resolved. If the problem persists or becomes severe, do not delay in contacting this hospital.

Constipation. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Report this to your hospital doctor who may prescribe a suitable laxative.

Ask the staff for a copy of 'Eating: Help Yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Loss of appetite**

If you experience a loss of appetite, please be sure to tell your doctor or nurse at your next hospital visit.

- **Strange taste**

Occasionally during treatment you may experience a strange taste, sometimes described as metallic or bitter. A strongly flavoured sweet or mint will help to disguise this.

- **Flu-like symptoms**

Some drugs may cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, aches and pains and shivering about 3 to 5 hours after your treatment. These symptoms are temporary and should go within 12 to 24 hours. Paracetamol will help. If your symptoms are particularly severe, tell your doctor on your next visit.

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

This is only usually mild and temporary but sometimes lasts for some time or become 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. Please tell your doctor if this occurs. High frequency hearing loss can also occur with this chemotherapy. This may be permanent.

- **Skin and nail changes**

PPE (palmar-plantar erythema): The skin on your hands and feet may become very dry, red and sore with some cracking. Tell your doctor. Cream and tablets can be prescribed to help. Your chemotherapy dose may need to change. Try to keep your hands and feet cool and if possible, uncovered.

Hyperpigmentation: Your skin may appear darker in colour or lightly tanned, especially around the joints. This is known as hyperpigmentation. Asian and African-Caribbean people may develop noticeable light patches on their skin. The skin will return to normal when treatment is finished.

- **Weakness of the heart**

Doxorubicin can affect the heart and weaken the heart muscle. This is uncommon and associated with increasing the dose of the drug. Your treatment will not exceed the maximum dose. If there is any concern about your heart, a scan of the heart will be carried out before the start of your treatment.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Sore eyes**

You may get a **dry, gritty feeling** in your eyes following treatment. If this happens, using Hypromellose eye drops will help to ease the discomfort. If the problem persists, contact this hospital. Your eyes may also water. This will improve in time and needs no specific treatment.

- **Depression**

This treatment can alter your mood causing you to feel low, irritable or agitated. Please tell the doctor at your next clinic visit if this is a problem.

- **Headaches**

This chemotherapy may cause headaches.

- **Jaw pain**

Sometimes vinblastine may cause jaw pain or difficulty swallowing. These effects are temporary and usually wear off gradually once treatment is finished.

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