



## Sorafenib (Nexavar<sup>®</sup>) for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC)

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 sorafenib (Nexavar<sup>®</sup>). Sorafenib is taken by mouth as tablets once or twice a day and is taken every day without a break. This treatment can be repeated for as long as you are benefitting from it and the side effects are tolerated.

Your tablets should be taken daily at about the same time every day. Timing is not dependent on meals and it is better to take the tablets in the morning and evening. If you do take these tablets with meals, we advise you to avoid high fat foods as this can reduce the effectiveness of the tablets. If you miss a dose you will just need to take your next dose when it is due.

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.

### Drug interactions

Some medicines interact with sorafenib, either making it less effective or more likely to cause side effects. Please check with your GP and pharmacist that any new medicines are safe, or contact us. Drugs which should be avoided include itraconazole, fluconazole, ketoconazole, rifampicin, clarithromycin, erythromycin, high dose steroids and warfarin; there are others so if you are in any doubt you should contact The Christie. Please do not drink any grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit while you are taking sorafenib. St John's Wort should also be avoided.

## Possible side effects

Sorafenib 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. If side effects are severe, you may need to stop your tablets, have a break from treatment, or have a dose reduction. A small number of people do not tolerate treatment.

### Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

- **Hypertension (high blood pressure)**

This is common but can usually be controlled by adding to or changing anti-hypertensive medication. It is very rare for patients to experience any serious heart problems.

- **Diarrhoea**

Mild diarrhoea is common. Anti-diarrhoeal tablets (loperamide) can be prescribed by your GP to control your symptoms. Severe diarrhoea is less common. Severe diarrhoea can stop you eating, or make you dehydrated, which can make you feel weak and dizzy. If the diarrhoea is severe or persistent contact The Christie Hotline.

- **Mucositis (sore mouth and mouth ulcers)**

Sorafenib can cause a sore mouth and mouth ulcers. Usually this is mild and responds to mouth washes. If it is severe enough to stop you eating and drinking normally, please contact The Christie.

- **Hand/foot skin reaction**

Some people can experience reddening and peeling of the skin on the hands and feet. Simple moisturisers can help if this is mild, but if it interferes with walking or normal use of hands or fingers, please contact The Christie.

- **Tiredness**

Sorafenib may make you feel tired and lacking in energy, but we would not expect you to be in bed during the daytime. Try to take rest and get help with household chores. If necessary take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial. Taking your tablets at bedtime can help.

- **Indigestion**

Some patients experience indigestion which can be treated with tablets. Some patients also have a reduced appetite but we would not expect you to lose weight.

- **Nausea and vomiting**

This is not a common problem but, if this does occur, you can be prescribed some anti-sickness tablets by your doctor.

- **Delayed wound healing**

Sorafenib also delays wound healing. **The tablets will usually have to be stopped before and after surgery or dental extraction**, and should not usually be taken if you have an open wound, leg ulcer or pressure sore. Let your nurse or doctor know if any of these issues come up.

- **Prone to bleeding**

Sorafenib can make you prone to bleeding. You may have bruising or bleeding, for example, from the nose, gums or in the urine. Contact The Christie Hotline if this occurs. A small number of patients have experienced serious bleeding complications.

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

- **Anaemia**

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Let your nurse or doctor know if these symptoms are a problem. You may need a blood transfusion.

- **Rash**

Sorafenib will make you more sensitive to the sun and can cause a rash. If this is widespread, please contact The Christie. More rarely some patients can develop a similar rash in the groin.

- **Liver and kidney problems**

This medication can affect the way your liver and kidneys function. We will monitor this on a regular basis.

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

#### **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.**

#### **Serious and potentially life-threatening side effects**

In a small proportion of patients anti-cancer therapy 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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: .....



The Christie Patient Information Service July 2014  
CHR/CT/934/26.09.12 Version 2 Review July 2017  
Details of the sources used are available, please contact [Patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:Patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)