



Vemurafenib

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 a treatment for you called Vemurafenib which is used to treat melanoma. The treatment is usually given twice daily and will continue for as long as it is working.

The treatment consists of up to 4 tablets taken twice a day. You should take the tablets with food. Swallow the tablets whole with a glass of water. Do not chew or crush the tablets.

Store the tablets at room temperature and keep in the original packaging.

If you forget a dose and it is more than 4 hours before the next dose is due, take the dose as soon as you remember. If it is less than 4 hours to the next dose, omit the missed dose and take the next dose at the usual time.

Do not take a double dose to make up for forgotten doses. If you take too many tablets contact The Christie Hotline immediately.

You will be seen for a course of treatment every 28 days.

Before this can be prescribed you will need to be seen by a doctor or a nurse clinician who will assess your general condition and check on the side effects that you have been experiencing. Please tell the doctor or nurse about all the medication that you are taking.

You will usually have a routine blood test before the start of each cycle of treatment and ECGs every 2-3 months. You will probably have scans to check that the treatment is still working every 2 months initially.

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.

If you are taking any other medicines...

It is important to tell the doctor if you are taking medicines for any other condition such as high blood pressure. Some medicines can react with Vemurafenib (either weakening or strengthening the effect). So always tell your doctor about any other medicines or tablets you are taking.

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)

- **Skin toxicity**

Sensitivity to sunlight: Vemurafenib can cause your skin to burn very easily in daylight. You need to protect your skin as soon as you start treatment. Apply a high factor sunscreen regularly (UVB factor 50 UVA 5 star). Make sure all exposed areas are covered and use a lip balm.

Skin rashes: Skin rashes vary from person to person but may be itchy, painful or hot. Contact the hospital if the rash involves more than half of your body and/or it is uncomfortable and if you develop any blisters, peeling skin or mouth ulcers.

Dry skin: This occurs in the majority of people taking Vemurafenib. Ensure that you use plenty of moisturiser and add a moisturiser to your bath or shower.

- **Painful joints**

Some or all of your joints may become inflamed causing stiffness and sometimes pain. This can usually be treated with simple analgesics, but if you are still getting discomfort which is affecting your quality of life, let your medical team know.

- **Lethargy/Fatigue**

Vemurafenib 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.

- **New skin cancers**

Some patients on Vemurafenib have developed skin lesions, some of which have been a non-serious form of skin cancer called a squamous cell cancer. These can be easily removed and are not likely to cause problems in the future. Let your medical team know if you develop any new skin lesions.

- **Alteration in kidney and liver tests**

Your blood tests will be monitored by the medical team and you may need to interrupt the treatment for a short while if the test results become abnormal as a result of the treatment.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

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.

- **Eye problems**

You may develop some inflammation or problems with your vision. If this happens, please contact The Christie Hotline.

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. Vemurafenib 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

The long term possible side effects of treatment with Vemurafenib are not yet known. Please speak with your doctor if you wish to discuss this further.

However, there may be some late side effects for people who have been on this treatment for a number of years. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

- Jackie Hodgetts on 0161 446 3868
- General enquiries on 0161 446 3000

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