

Cisplatin and gemcitabine

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 which includes the chemotherapy cisplatin and gemcitabine.

The treatment plan consists of:

Day 1 Cisplatin via a drip over 1 hour. You will have a saline drip for 1 hour before the cisplatin. The cisplatin is followed by another saline drip over 1 hour and 30 minutes and then gemcitabine via a drip over 30 minutes.

Day 8 Repeat of Day 1

Day 15 Rest week, no chemotherapy

Day 21 Restart with the next cycle (Day 1)

Treatment is given for 6 cycles

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.

Kidney function: It is important to monitor how your kidneys are working while you are having treatment. We do this through routine blood tests, or GFR test (most accurate test of kidney function). It is important to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids (at least 8 cups) the day before and for a few days after chemotherapy.

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.

Kidney function (Warning!)

Cisplatin can rarely cause long term damage to the kidneys. Your kidney function will be closely monitored with each clinic visit. Some medicines can be harmful to take when you are having this chemotherapy. Let your doctor know about any medication you are taking.



Flu vaccinations

It's safe to have a flu jab but depending on the sort of chemotherapy you have had, it may not give quite as much protection against infection as usual. Some patients may need two vaccinations. However, if you're thinking of having any other vaccinations, do check with your Christie doctor first, because some vaccines should be avoided.

COVID-19 vaccinations

We advise that all patients receive a COVID-19 vaccination when this is offered. Your doctor will discuss with you the best time to have this.

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)

• 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.

• Nausea and vomiting (sickness) (Warning!)

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.

• 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.

• Flu-like symptoms

Some chemotherapy may cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, aches and pains and shivering about 3 to 5 hours after it is given. These symptoms should be 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.

- **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.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Skin rash**

You may develop a skin rash. This is usually mild and easily treated. Please tell your doctor on your next visit.

- **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.

- **Upset bowels**

You may get upset bowels with this chemotherapy:

Diarrhoea

If this is a mild problem while you are having treatment, anti-diarrhoea medication can be purchased 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 The Christie. Ask the staff for a copy of 'Eating: help yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment. Drink plenty of fluids and maintain hydration if you do get diarrhoea.

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.

- **Tinnitus and 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.

- **Tingling and 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.

- **Hair thinning**

Some hair loss may occur during treatment although this is unlikely. 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 can be permanent.

The cancer information centre offers practical and emotional support about hair loss for men and women. They will also advise about headwear and access to the wig service. Drop in, contact **0161 446 8100/8107** or email the-christie.informationcentre@nhs.net.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Extravasation**

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 straightaway.

- **Breathlessness**

Very rarely this chemotherapy can cause inflammation of your lungs. This can make you breathless. Tell your doctor if you develop this problem while you are having this chemotherapy. Stopping the chemotherapy and taking steroids will help.

- **Fluid retention**

Your feet/legs may become swollen on this chemotherapy. If this is mild, no specific treatment is needed. Keeping your feet and legs raised may help. Tell your doctor if the swelling is severe.

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.

- **Blood clots (Warning!)**

People with cancer are at a higher risk of developing blood clots. The medical name for this is a thromboembolism or a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). The most common place to develop a clot is in the leg.

You must contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** immediately if you experience any of the following:

- Pain, redness and swelling of your arm or leg(s). The area may feel warm to touch.
- Breathlessness, pain in your chest or upper back, light headedness, coughing up blood.

For any chest pain, please call **999** immediately.

You can help to prevent a clot by taking regular short walks to keep the blood moving, do simple exercises such as bending and straightening your toes every hour if you are unable to move around much and drink plenty of fluids. Most clots can be treated successfully using drugs to help thin the blood (anticoagulants).

Sex, contraception and 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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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.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



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