

## Carboplatin & oral etoposide (NET)

The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people this 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 has prescribed for you a course of treatment with etoposide and carboplatin. The treatment consists of the following:

**Day 1 (week 1)** Etoposide chemotherapy capsules twice a day for 7 days

**Day 8 (week 2)** Carboplatin in a drip over 60 minutes

**Day 15 (week 3)** No treatment or clinic visit

**Day 21 (week 4)** No treatment or clinic visit

This treatment is repeated every 4 weeks for a total of 3 to 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.

Your etoposide is being given as a capsule (50 mg.) These capsules should be swallowed whole and not be broken. Your capsules will be supplied from Pharmacy clearly labelled with directions on how many capsules you need to take, how often, and for how long.

1. Take the capsules twice a day (morning and evening) 10 - 12 hours apart.
2. Take the capsules every day for 7 days (including Saturday and Sunday).
3. Take the capsules approximately 1 hour before food.
4. Take the capsules with water only.
5. Store your capsules in a cool, dry place and out of reach of children.
- 6. If you miss a dose, do not double up the next dose. Take your regular dose at the next scheduled time. Bring back any left-over capsules to the clinic.**
7. Do not get a 'repeat prescription' from your GP when the capsules run out – these are for hospital use only.
8. If you are buying any other over-the-counter medicines, remember to tell the pharmacist you are taking etoposide capsules.

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.**

**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 (more accurate test of kidney function), although we may ask you to bring a 24-hour urine collection before your treatment. **It is important to drink plenty of fluids (at least 8 cups) the day before and for a few days after chemotherapy.**

## 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 (Warning!)

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Tell your doctor 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)

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 to be sick, contact your GP or The Christie so that your anti-sickness medication can be reviewed and changed, if necessary.

### • Hair loss

Most people will lose all of their hair following this type chemotherapy. 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. Very rarely, hair loss can be permanent.

The cancer information centre offers a coping with hair loss service to all patients where support, information and advice will be given. Drop in, contact **0161 446 8100** or email **informationcentre@christie.nhs.uk**. Information about the wig service can also be found here and vouchers for wigs can also be obtained for eligible patients. The wig room provides a drop in service, please see The Christie leaflet 'The wig fitting service' for further information.

The Maggie's Centre runs a Talking Heads hair loss support workshop for anyone who is anticipating or experiencing hair loss (both men and women). These sessions cover the practicalities of hair loss as well as offering support with its emotional impact. Contact Maggie's on **0161 641 4848** or email **manchester@maggiescentres.org**.

- **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.

- **Lethargy**

Chemotherapy often makes 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.

- **Diarrhoea**

If this becomes a problem during or after your treatment, anti-diarrhoea tablets can be prescribed by your doctor. Ask the staff for a copy of The Christie booklet 'Eating - help yourself' which has some useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

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

- **Immediate allergic reactions:**

Allergic reactions to carboplatin are uncommon. Please ask the staff for help immediately if you notice any of the following: 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 straight away. Your doctor may prescribe further medication that can help to reduce these side effects.

- **Kidney function**

This medication can affect your kidney function. This will be monitored on a regular basis throughout your treatment.

- **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.

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

This is uncommon and it is usually only mild and temporary. On rare occasions, this may be permanent. You should report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

## **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 straight away.

## **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 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: .....

© 2020 The Christie NHS Foundation Trust. This document may be copied for use within the NHS only on the condition that The Christie NHS Foundation Trust is acknowledged as the creator.

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 **patient.information@christie.nhs.uk**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. 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