

# Sorafenib (Nexavar®) for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC)

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 has prescribed a course of treatment with sorafenib (Nexavar®). 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. You should store your medicine in a cool dry place, out of reach of children.

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. The herbal medicine 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 medical team or 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. Drinking plenty of fluids and cleaning your teeth regularly and gently with a soft toothbrush can help to reduce the risk of this happening. To prevent infection you should use an antibacterial mouthwash (Chlorhexidine – dilute this with water if your mouth is sore). Ask your doctor or nurse for advice. The chemotherapy booklet also has general mouthcare advice. If you have a sore mouth your doctor or nurse can prescribe a benzydamine mouthwash. If you continue to have a sore mouth or it is severe enough to stop you eating and drinking normally, please contact The Christie Hotline for advice.

### • 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. Try to keep your hands and feet cool and, if possible, uncovered or wear loose-fitting cotton socks. 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.

### • 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.

### • 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. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a high factor sunblock cream.

- **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 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.

## 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: .....

PROOF

© 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