

## Nilotinib

Nilotinib is a targeted (biological) therapy. The possible benefits of treatment vary. This group of drugs block the growth and spread of cancer. They target and interfere with processes in the cells that cause cancer to grow.

### Your treatment

Your doctor or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a treatment called nilotinib. Nilotinib is a type of targeted therapy drug called a protein-tyrosine kinase inhibitor. It works by blocking signals within cancer cells that make them grow and divide. This may help to stop or slow down the cancer growing. Nilotinib is used for treatment of Philadelphia chromosome-positive Chronic Myeloid Leukaemia (CML) and Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) that do not respond to, or are intolerant to prior therapy, including imatinib.

You take nilotinib either once or twice a day. You usually keep taking nilotinib every day for as long as it keeps the cancer under control.

Your doctor may ask you to stop taking nilotinib or take a lower dose because of side effects.

Nilotinib must be taken on an empty stomach.

Avoid food at least 2 hours before the dose is taken.

Avoid food for 1 hour after the dose is taken.

Avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice while taking this medication.

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 treatment. 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. A normal temperature is between 36°C and 37.5°C.

If your temperature is 37.5°C or above, or below 36°C or you have symptoms of an infection, contact The Christie Hotline straight away.



## Possible side effects

Nilotinib can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. We are all different, so we may get different side effects with varying severity. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in 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

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.

You will have a routine blood test every day while you are in hospital to monitor the effects of the chemotherapy, but please tell your nurse if you experience any of the symptoms listed above.

### • Rash

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

### • Headache

Headache can sometimes occur and can be managed with painkillers. If it is severe you should contact The Christie Hotline.

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

### • Itching

You may develop itchy skin. Ask your doctor or nurse on your next visit and they may be able to prescribe a suitable treatment to help with this.

### • 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 'Eating: help yourself' which has some useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

### • 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. If you continue to feel or be sick, tell your nurse because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

### • Constipation

You may become constipated. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Tell your doctor who may prescribe a suitable laxative. Please contact The Christie Hotline if your constipation lasts more than 3 days or you experience abdominal discomfort.

### • 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 when necessary. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

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

### • Liver toxicity

A rare, but potentially serious side effect of nilotinib is liver toxicity. There may be elevations in transaminase, bilirubin, and lactate dehydrogenase. Liver function will be monitored while taking this medication.

### Other medicines.

• Nilotinib may interact with several other types of medicines. This includes the herbal remedy St John's Wort. Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs, complementary therapies and herbal drugs.

• Do not take with grapefruit or Seville oranges; this includes eating them, drinking the juice or taking a supplement that may contain them.

## 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 treatment. Nilotinib is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any 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 treatment 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.

## Medical and dental treatment

If you need to go into hospital for any reason, always tell the doctors and nurses that you are having nilotinib. Explain you are taking capsules that no one should stop or restart without advice from your cancer doctor. Give them contact details for your cancer doctor. Talk to your cancer doctor or nurse if you think you need dental treatment. Always tell your dentist you are taking nilotinib before having any dental 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:

• Haematology CNS **0161 446 8167 or 918 7962**

• Haematology Day Unit **0161 446 3924**

For advice ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours)

Your consultant is: .....

Your hospital number is: .....

Your key worker is: .....

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.

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We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. 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

