

## Abemaciclib (Verzenios®)

Abemaciclib is a targeted (biological) therapy. 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. When used to treat breast cancer, abemaciclib is taken alongside hormone (endocrine) therapy.

### Your treatment

Your doctor, nurse clinician or pharmacist has prescribed for you a treatment called abemaciclib.

Your treatment is taken continuously and supplied on a 4 week cycle.

Each cycle consists of:

**Abemaciclib tablets are taken TWICE a day (morning and evening) with or without food. Take with a glass of water and swallow whole.**

If you vomit after taking a dose, do not repeat the dose. Take your next dose at your normal time.

You will have a routine blood test when you come in to outpatients to collect your treatment. These tests are required as follows:

**Cycle 1 and 2** – Day 1 and 15 blood test

**Cycle 3 onwards** – Day 1 blood test

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 treatment may be delayed a week or dose reduced.

You should continue taking your hormone (endocrine) therapy even if your abemaciclib is withheld.

**You must never take your treatment unless you have had your blood checked and been given the go-ahead by the doctor, nurse clinician or pharmacist.**

Avoid having grapefruit or grapefruit juice while taking abemaciclib. Some medicines and herbal remedies may interact with abemaciclib. Please consult your doctor or pharmacist if you are starting any new medications.

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.



## Possible side effects

Cancer treatments 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.

## 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, and 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.**

## Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

### • Diarrhoea (Warning!)

Diarrhoea is a common side effect of Abemaciclib. This is usually worst in the first month of treatment.

If you have diarrhoea you should immediately take the anti-diarrhoea treatment that the doctor has prescribed for you. This is loperamide dispensed by The Christie Pharmacy. Follow the doctor's instructions EXACTLY:

Take 2 loperamide capsules as soon as you have your first liquid stool. Then take 1 capsule with each liquid loose stool. (Maximum loperamide: 8 capsules in any 24 hour period).

Try to remain well hydrated (8 to 10 glasses of clear fluids each day).

If you continue to have more than 4 bowel movements a day (compared to pre-treatment) or bowel movements at night, contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** for advice.

### • 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.

### • Neutropenia (Low numbers of neutrophils)

While having this treatment you may become neutropenic (have low numbers of neutrophils or white blood cells). You may not be aware of this or feel any different but can be more susceptible to infections. You may need to pause your treatment or reduce your dose .

### • 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.

### • Lethargy

Some treatments may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. It can be frustrating when you feel unable to cope with routine tasks. You may benefit from additional support during your treatment. Complementary therapies may be helpful. Speak to your nurse or doctor for further information. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise, such as walking, can help.

- **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, contact The Christie Hotline.

- **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.

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given along with your treatment 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.

- **Loss of appetite**

If you lose your appetite, please be sure to tell your doctor or nurse at your next hospital visit.

- **Sore eyes**

You may get a dry, gritty feeling in your eyes following treatment. If this happens, using Hypromellose eye drops will help to ease the discomfort. These are available at any pharmacy. If the problem persists, or you get blurred vision contact The Christie. Your eyes may also water. This will improve in time and needs no specific treatment.

- **Hair thinning**

Some hair loss may occur during treatment, including body and facial hair. 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 may be permanent. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you by visiting the cancer information centre. It is a good idea to get your wig before you lose a lot of hair which you can then match to your natural colour. Ask the staff for a copy of the 'Wig fitting service at The Christie'.

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](mailto:manchester@maggiescentres.org).

- **Skin rash**

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

- **Liver problems**

This treatment can occasionally cause abnormal liver blood tests. This is rarely very severe, but your liver function will be monitored every time you come to the clinic for your treatment.

## 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!)

There is an increased risk of blood clots for patients receiving abemaciclib. This can cause a variety of symptoms depending on which blood vessel the clot is affecting, such as swollen leg, breathlessness, chest pain or coughing up blood. If you do develop a blood clot you'll need to have treatment urgently to thin your blood and dissolve the clot.

If you have any of these symptoms at any point during your treatment, please contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** for advice.

## 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**

Treatment centre nurses - **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: .....

Notes:

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

