

## Temozolomide (Oral)

The possible benefits of this 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 Temozolomide. Temozolomide is given by mouth as capsules once a day for 5 days. The course is repeated every 28 days (4 weeks), usually for 6 or 12 cycles (months).

Your total daily Temozolomide dose may be made up of several Temozolomide capsules of different strengths. If you are unsure about how to take your capsules, please ask your pharmacist or a member of the team treating you.

Temozolomide should be swallowed whole with a glass of water taken on an empty stomach. We recommend that you do not eat for 1 to 2 hours before taking the Temozolomide and for 1 to 2 hours afterwards.

You will have a routine blood test and be reviewed in clinic by a member of the medical team 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.

If you forget to take the capsules, take the missed dose as soon as possible within the same day. If a full day has gone by, let your doctor or nurse know. **Do not take a double dose.**

If you vomit after you take a capsule, do not take a second capsule that day. Please contact the hospital or your GP as you may need different anti-sickness tablets.

The capsules should never be opened or crushed. If they become damaged, avoid getting the powder on your skin or in your eyes. If you accidentally get some on your skin or in your eyes, you should wash immediately.

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.**

## 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)

### • Prone to bleeding (Warning!)

Temozolomide can often affect your platelet count. Platelets are the part of the blood which helps blood to clot, so you may have nose bleeds, bruising or bleeding, (for example from the gums). Sometimes you may need platelet transfusions. If significant bleeding occurs, please ring The Christie Hotline.

### • Nausea and vomiting (sickness)

The severity of this varies from person to person. You will be given anti-sickness tablets to take home, and it is helpful to take an anti-sickness tablet around 30 minutes before your temozolomide tablets each day. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or The Christie, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

### • Rash

Temozolomide may cause an itchy rash. If this happens, stop taking your tablets and let your hospital doctor know.

### • Lethargy

Temozolomide chemotherapy may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. 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 help.

### • Headache

Let your doctor know if you get headaches while you are on treatment.

### • Constipation

You may become constipated during this treatment. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. You can also try simple laxatives which you can buy from a pharmacy, but make sure you tell your Christie doctor about this. Your Christie doctor or GP can prescribe stronger laxatives if necessary.

### • Diarrhoea

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, anti-diarrhoea medication can be prescribed by your GP until this is resolved. If this problem persists, contact The Christie. If you have mild diarrhoea anti-diarrhoea tablets from the pharmacy may help.

### • Loss of appetite

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, ask staff for a copy of the booklet 'Eating – help yourself'.

## • Hair thinning

Hair loss is uncommon but your hair may thin during treatment, including body and facial hair. 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 so you can match it 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)

## Uncommon side effects (less 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.

### • Liver problems

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

### • Severe and ongoing bone marrow suppression

While some reduction in the numbers of white blood cells (infection fighting cells), red blood cells and platelets occurs in almost everyone receiving this treatment, this can occasionally be more severe and long-lasting, and could prevent the continuation of chemotherapy. Your doctor can discuss this with you.

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

### • Kidney problems

Temozolomide rarely affects kidney function. Your kidney function will be monitored every time you come to the clinic for your treatment.

### • Severe chest infection

Temozolomide chemotherapy can make you more prone to particular types of chest infection. If you develop a cough associated with shortness of breath, contact The Christie Hotline or your GP.

## 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**
- Neuro oncology clinical nurse specialist - **0161 918 7171**

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

