

Accelerated MVAC with GCSF support

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 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 or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a combination of chemotherapy including doxorubicin, vinblastine and methotrexate. We plan to give you this chemotherapy treatment every 2 weeks for 3 cycles.

The treatment plan consists of:

- Day 1** **Doxorubicin, vinblastine, methotrexate** are given slowly and directly into the vein via a drip with fluids, followed by **cisplatin** given directly into the vein via a drip over 8 hours.
- Day 2** To support your immune system you will receive 5 injections of GCSF underneath your skin (we will give you more details about this drug).
- Day 14** Restart with the next cycle (Day 1)
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.

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 suggest 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)

• 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.

• 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 and get help with household chores. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

• Hair loss

Hair loss is usually total. The hair falls out gradually 1 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.

• Kidney function (Warning!)

Cisplatin can rarely cause long term damage to the kidneys. We will closely monitor your kidney function at each clinic visit.

• Nausea and vomiting (sickness) (Warning!)

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 be sick, contact your GP or your doctor at The Christie, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

• Red urine

Doxorubicin because of its red colour may discolour your urine red for up to 24 hours following treatment. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about.

- **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 tooth brush 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 Christie chemotherapy booklet. If you continue to have a sore mouth, please contact The Christie Hotline.

- **Sensitivity to the sun**

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.

- **GCSF side effects**

GCSF a growth factor which stimulates the bone marrow to make white blood cells, may be used during chemotherapy treatment to help reduce the risk of infection.

Possible side effects of GCSF may include nausea, vomiting, chest pain, musculoskeletal pain, tiredness, generalised weakness, hair loss, skin rash, constipation, anorexia, diarrhoea, cough, sore mouth/throat, headache and gout. These side effects are the most common side effects of GCSF. Some people may experience other less common side effects, therefore it is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about and side effects that you experience.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Allergic reaction**

Ask the staff for help if you notice any of the following:

- Some people have hot flushes when the drug is being given.
- 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 straightaway. Your doctor may prescribe a drug that can help to reduce these side effects and, if necessary, we can give you this before your next treatment.

- **Upset bowels**

You may get upset bowels with this chemotherapy:

Diarrhoea If this is a mild problem while you are having treatment, anti-diarrhoea tablets can be bought from a pharmacy or prescribed by your GP for a temporary period until this is resolved. If the problem persists or becomes severe, do not delay in contacting The Christie.

Constipation Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Report this to your hospital doctor who may prescribe a suitable laxative.

Ask the staff for a copy of The Christie booklet 'Eating - help yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Loss of appetite**

If you experience a loss of appetite, please be sure to tell your doctor or nurse at your next hospital visit.

- **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.

- **Flu-like symptoms**

Some drugs may cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, aches and pains and shivering about 3 to 5 hours after your treatment. These symptoms should be temporary and should go within 12 to 24 hours. Paracetamol will help. If your symptoms are particularly severe, tell your doctor on your next visit.

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

This is only usually mild and temporary but can occasionally last for some time or may become permanent. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

- **Tinnitus and high frequency hearing loss**

You may develop tinnitus (ringing in the ears), this sensation should subside then your treatment finishes. Please tell your doctor if this occurs. High frequency hearing loss can also occur with this chemotherapy. This may be permanent.

- **Skin and nail changes**

PPE (palmar-plantar erythema) The skin on your hands and feet may become very, dry red and sore with some cracking. Tell your doctor. Cream and tablets can be prescribed to help. Your chemotherapy dose may need to change. Try to keep your hands and feet cool and if possible, uncovered.

Hyperpigmentation Your skin may appear darker in colour or lightly tanned, especially around the joints. This is known as hyper pigmentation. Asian and African-Caribbean people may develop noticeable light patches on their skin. The skin will return to normal when treatment is finished.

- **Weakness of the heart**

Doxorubicin can affect the heart and weaken the heart muscle. This is uncommon and associated with increasing the dose of the drug. Your treatment will not exceed the maximum dose. If there is any concern about your heart, a scan of the heart will be carried out before the start of your treatment.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **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. If the problem persists contact this hospital. Your eyes may also water. This will improve in time and needs no specific treatment.

- **Depression**

This treatment can alter your mood causing you to feel low, irritable or agitated. Please tell the doctor at your next clinic visit if this is a problem.

- **Headaches**

This chemotherapy may cause headaches.

- **Jaw pain**

Sometime vinblastine may cause jaw pain or difficulty swallowing. These effects are temporary and usually wear off gradually once treatment is finished.

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:

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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 **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

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