

Carboplatin

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 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 or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a treatment which includes the chemotherapy carboplatin. This involves giving the chemotherapy directly into a vein via a drip. Each dose takes about 1 hour but be prepared to be on the treatment unit for longer than this.

The treatment is repeated every 3 weeks for a total of 4 cycles.

You will have a routine blood test before each treatment to monitor the effects of the chemotherapy. 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.

Kidney function

It is vital to monitor how your kidneys are working before and during your treatment. This is done by checking your blood results or we may ask you to have a GFR (nuclear medicine test) which involves an extra visit to hospital for approximately 4 hours.

We strongly advise current smokers to stop smoking while having this treatment.

If you would like help with stopping smoking, please let your doctor or nurse know, they can arrange this for you.

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)

• 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.

• Nausea and vomiting (sickness)

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may 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 this hospital, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

• 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 a daily walk can be beneficial.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

• Bruising or bleeding (Warning!)

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Tell your doctor 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.

• Constipation

You may become constipated during this treatment. 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 'Eating - help yourself' which offers useful information about diet when you are having treatment.

• Diarrhoea

If this becomes a 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 contact The Christie Hotline.

• Tingling and numbness in the fingers or toes

This is uncommon. It is usually only mild and temporary but it can gradually build up during the treatment course and occasionally become permanent. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Immediate allergic reactions**

Allergic reactions to carboplatin are uncommon, but please ask your treating team for help immediately if you notice any of the following: 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 your treating team straight away. Your doctor may prescribe medication that can help to reduce these side effects and, if necessary, we can give you this before your next treatment.

- **Tinnitus and high frequency hearing loss**

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

- **Kidney damage**

There is a very small risk of damage to the kidneys from the carboplatin.

- **Hair thinning**

Hair loss does not usually occur with this chemotherapy although you may notice that your hair thins out a little. The Maggie's Centre can support you with hair loss by helping you consider the practicalities as well as the emotional impact. You can call into Maggie's Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm to speak with their professional team. Maggie's provide expert care and support to everyone with cancer and those who love them. Contact Maggie's on **0161 641 4848** or email **manchester@maggies.org**.

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 barrier form of contraception 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.

For female patients only

Loss of periods: Due to the effect of chemotherapy on the ovaries, you may find that your periods become irregular or stop. This is more likely in women over the age of 40 when most women will notice some change in their periods. It is less common in women under the age of 40 but does still happen and can result in significant menopausal symptoms (see section below). Even if your periods stop completely during chemotherapy your periods may come back several years later. This means that you may be able to become pregnant even many years after chemotherapy. It is very important to use contraception if you don't want to get pregnant.

Menopausal symptoms: When the ovaries stop working due to chemotherapy or during a natural menopause most women experience symptoms such as hot flushes, sweats (night and day) and vaginal dryness. These hormonal changes can make the vagina feel as though it has shrunk and become less easy to stretch.

This is called vaginal atrophy and can result in discomfort, pain on sexual intercourse, itching and recurrent urine infections. If your ovaries don't start to work again the vaginal symptoms can be permanent, although the flushes and sweats tend to reduce and stop over a small number of years. Some women who have already gone through menopause may notice their symptoms worsening for a time after chemotherapy.

The vaginal symptoms can start early and the longer they are left the harder they can be to treat. Please contact your specialist nurse either in clinic or by phone when the symptoms first develop if you would like help. Symptoms can be managed in several ways including gels, essential oil pessaries and sometimes local oestrogen replacement. You may also find it helpful to request the booklet 'Menopausal symptoms and breast cancer' by Breast Cancer Now (either from your specialist nurse, the cancer information centre at The Christie or online).

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.

Flu vaccination

Is it alright for me to have a flu jab during the time I'm having chemotherapy?

It's safe to have a flu jab but depending on the sort of chemotherapy you have had, it may not give quite as much protection against infection as usual. Some patients may need 2 vaccinations. However, if you're thinking of having any other vaccinations, do check with your Christie doctor first, because some vaccines should be avoided.

COVID-19 vaccinations

We advise that all patients receive a COVID-19 vaccination when this is offered. Your doctor will discuss with you the best time to have this.

Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring:

Administration enquiries - **0161 918 7606/7610**

Chemotherapy nurse - **0161 918 7171**

Clinical trials unit - **0161 918 7663**

Lung cancer nurse team - **0161 918 2595**

Your doctor's secretary..... **0161**

Your consultant is:

Your hospital number is:

Your key worker:

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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, Salford or Macclesfield. 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