

## Carboplatin and etoposide (NET)

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 Christie booklet 'SACT, a guide' which gives general information on systemic anti-cancer therapy and side effects.

### Your treatment

Your doctor or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a course of treatment with etoposide and carboplatin. The treatment consists of the following:

Day 1	Carboplatin by drip over 1 hour Etoposide by drip over 1 to 2 hours
Days 2 and 3	Etoposide by drip over 90 minutes
Day 15	Clinic visit
Day 21	Restart with the next cycle (Day 1)

This treatment is repeated every 3 weeks for a total of 4 to 6 cycles.

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.

Kidney function. It is important to monitor how your kidneys are working while you are having treatment. We will do this through routine blood tests, or GFR test (the most accurate test of kidney function). It is important to drink plenty of fluids (at least 8 glasses, approximately 2 litres) the day before and for a few days after chemotherapy.

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.



## Flu vaccinations

### 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.

## 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

- **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 (Warning!)**

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.

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

Nausea and vomiting are commonly associated with chemotherapy but the severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given along with your chemotherapy to prevent this. You may also be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. 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.

- **Diarrhoea**

Diarrhoea is a common side effect of your treatment. If you have watery 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 these instructions EXACTLY:** Take 2 loperamide capsules as soon as the first liquid stool occurs. If you continue to have episodes of liquid stools, then take 1 capsule/tablet with each episode (allow at least 2 hours between doses). The maximum dose of loperamide is 8 capsules/tablets per day, however some patients with a stoma may require more than this to control output.

If you have a stoma or notice capsules in stoma output, you should ask for tablets rather than capsules. If the diarrhoea persists for more than 24 hours despite the loperamide, contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**.

You must tell your doctor if:

- you have a temperature/fever as well as diarrhoea
- you have nausea/vomiting as well as diarrhoea
- you still have diarrhoea 48 hours after starting the diarrhoea treatment.

- **Hair loss**

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 8439** or email **the-christie.informationcentre@nhs.net**. 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 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 to 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**, email: **manchester@maggies.org** or drop in, their address is The Robert Parfett Building, 15 Kinnaird Road, Manchester, M20 4QL

- **Lethargy**

Chemotherapy often makes 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.

- **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, please 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.

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

- **Kidney damage (Warning!)**

Before you start the treatment you will need to have a special test called a GFR. This is so we can work out the correct dose of your chemotherapy. The GFR is performed in the radioisotope department and is a series of blood tests. Your routine blood tests will also give us an idea of how well your kidneys are working. There is a very small risk of damage to the kidneys from the carboplatin.

- **Immediate allergic reactions**

Allergic reactions to carboplatin are uncommon. Please ask the staff for help **immediately** if you notice any of the following: fevers and chills, back pain, shortness of breath, headaches and swelling of the face during the time the drug is being given. Your doctor may prescribe further medication that can help to reduce these side effects.

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

This is uncommon and it is usually only mild and temporary. On rare occasions, this may be permanent. You should report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

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

- **Extravasation**

Extravasation is when chemotherapy leaks outside the vein. If you develop redness, soreness or pain at the injection site at any time please let us know straight away.

## 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.

## 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:

Administration enquiries                      **0161 918 7606/7610**

Chemotherapy nurse                            **0161 918 7171**

Clinical trials unit                                **0161 918 7663**

For urgent advice ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

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.

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.



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urgent support and specialist advice  
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