

## Brentuximab vedotin

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 course of treatment with brentuximab vedotin. The treatment is given as an infusion into your vein. The treatment consists of the following:

**Day 1: Brentuximab vedotin by infusion over 30 minutes.**

The treatment is given every 3 weeks for up to 16 cycles.

You will have a routine blood test and medical review before the start of each cycle of treatment. This is so your team can monitor and manage any side effects as well as assess your response to 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 are taking any other medicines:** It is important to tell the doctor if you are taking medicine for any other condition. Some medicines can react with your treatment. So always tell your doctor at every visit about any other medicines or tablets you are taking.

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

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.



## Tumour lysis syndrome

This treatment may cause the rapid breakdown of lymphoma cells, which may lead to abnormalities in the blood. This problem is more likely if you have a lot of disease or if your kidneys do not work as well as they should do. Your doctor will tell you if you are at risk. You may be given a kidney-protective medicine called allopurinol for the first cycle of treatment, and your doctor may do additional blood tests to monitor this side effect. We sometimes admit patients for the first treatment to give intravenous fluids and kidney-protective medication and twice daily monitoring of blood tests for 48 hours.

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

### • 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.**

### • Anaemia (low number of red blood cells)

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Tell your doctor or nurse 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. 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.

### • Infusion-related reactions

This side effect can occur while you are having the infusion (or on the evening when you get home) and includes chills, fever and shivering. If you have any of these side effects please tell your nurse straight away. During your infusion your progress will be monitored regularly by specialist chemotherapy nurses. Rarely, you may also develop a skin rash, headache, tumour pain, sore throat or sickness. In severe cases, breathing difficulties, rapid heartbeat and low blood pressure may be encountered. If you feel unwell during the infusion, please tell the nurse or doctor immediately. This may be an allergic reaction and they may need to slow down or stop the drip, or give you anti-allergy medications.

### • Tingling and numbness in the fingers or toes/muscle weakness

This is common but is usually only mild and temporary. It can sometimes last for some time or become permanent. Sometimes you may also have difficulty controlling the muscles in your arms and legs or your balance. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

### • Skin and nails

A mild skin rash may occur during treatment. This may be treated with antihistamines and simple creams. Rarely, patients may develop a more serious skin reaction that prevents further treatment being given.

### • Nausea and vomiting (sickness)

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given with brentuximab vedotin infusions to prevent this. You may also be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact The Christie, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

## • Hair loss

Some hair loss can occur with brentuximab vedotin. 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. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you by visiting the cancer information centre or call: **0161 446 8100**. It is a good idea to get you 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'.

The Maggie's Centre runs a Talking Heads hair loss support workshop for anyone who is 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)

## • Lethargy

Brentuximab vedotin 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.

## • Blood sugar

Brentuximab vedotin may cause your blood sugar to rise. If you are diabetic then you may need to increase the dose of any diabetic medication you take (insulin or tablets). You should discuss this with your doctor before starting the chemotherapy.

## • Constipation and/or diarrhoea

This treatment can cause constipation and/or diarrhoea. Report this to your hospital doctor who may prescribe suitable medicines once an infection has been excluded. You may be asked to provide a stool sample for this.

## • Muscle pain

Brentuximab can cause muscle pain or weakness. Let your doctor or nurse know if you experience any of these symptoms.

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

### • Abdominal pain (Warning!)

Rarely, brentuximab vedotin causes acute inflammation of the pancreas. Please contact The Christie Hotline or your medical team without delay if you experience abdominal pain.

### • 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.

### • 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.

## 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 this 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

There are currently no known late side effects as this is a new medicine. We may in future discover side effects which are not known about at this present time. Please discuss with your doctor if you have concerns about this

## Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

Haematology day unit - **0161 446 3924**

Lymphoma clinical nurse specialists - **0161 446 8573**

Lymphoma secretaries:

**0161 446 3753** - Professor Radford/Dr Linton

**0161 446 8574** - Professor Illidge

**0161 446 3956** - Dr Smith

**0161 446 3332** - Professor Cowan

**0161 446 3302** - Dr Harris/Dr Chan

**0161 446 3869** - Dr Bloor

Palatine treatment ward - **0161 446 3960/3961** or **3925**

General enquiries - **0161 446 3000**

Your consultant is: ..... Your hospital number is: .....

Your key worker is: .....

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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 **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