

# Vandetanib (Caprelsa®) for medullary thyroid cancer

Vandetanib is a type of anti-cancer treatment called a targeted therapy. The aim of this treatment is to control the cancer and its symptoms. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions you may have about your treatment.

## Your treatment

Your doctor has prescribed a course of treatment with Vandetanib (Caprelsa®). Vandetanib is taken by mouth as tablets once a day and is taken every day without a break. This treatment can be continued for as long as you are benefitting from it and the side effects are tolerated.

Your tablets should be taken once daily at approximately the same time every day and may be taken with or without food. Do not crush or chew the tablets. If you forget to take your tablets, and it is 12 hours or more until your next dose is due take the missed tablet as soon as you remember. If it is less than 12 hours until your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the same time.

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.

## Drug interactions

Please do not start any new medications without seeking medical advice from The Christie thyroid team, your GP or pharmacist. Vandetanib can cause an irregular heart rhythm (page 3) and it is important to avoid medications that may increase this risk. Drugs which should be avoided include: some heart and blood pressure medications, warfarin, fluconazole, ketoconazole, rifampicin, clarithromycin, erythromycin, carbamazepine, haloperidol, venlafaxine, chlorpromazine and ondansetron. Please do not drink any grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit while you are taking Vandetanib. St John's Wort should also be avoided.

## PATIENT ALERT CARD (Warning!)

You will be provided with a patient alert card when you start taking your medication. Please keep this with you in your wallet or purse and show this to any healthcare professional in the event of feeling unwell or on admission to hospital.



## Possible side effects

Vandetanib 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. If side effects are severe, you may need to stop your tablets, have a break from treatment, or have a dose reduction. A small number of people do not tolerate treatment.

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

### • Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Your blood pressure will be checked at each clinic appointment. If you develop hypertension, the team will discuss commencing medication to control your blood pressure. Occasionally, we will need to stop your vandetanib if your blood pressure remains uncontrolled despite medication. It is rare for patients to experience any serious heart problems.

### • Diarrhoea

Mild diarrhoea is common. Anti-diarrhoeal tablets (loperamide) can be prescribed to control your symptoms. Severe diarrhoea is less common. If you develop diarrhoea with an increase in stool frequency of four or more times above your normal daily bowel function, please contact The Christie Hotline.

### • Rash, acne and skin sensitivity to sunlight

You may develop a rash or acne with this medication; it is usually mild and often settles during treatment. The thyroid team may prescribe a moisturiser. Your skin will be more sensitive to sunlight. Please avoid excessive sun exposure, wear protective clothing and use a high factor sun cream when outdoors.

### • Mood changes

Some people experience an alteration in their mood. If this occurs, please discuss this at your clinic appointment.

### • Nausea and vomiting

If these symptoms occur, we can prescribe you anti-sickness medication.

### • Decreased appetite and weight loss

We advise you to try to eat and drink as normal. We will monitor your weight at the outpatient appointments.

### • Inflammation or infection of the upper airways

The lining of the nose, throat and lung passages may be more sensitive, causing mild discomfort. An increased risk of a chest infection has also been reported. Please contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** if you develop a cough, temperature or worsening breathlessness.

### • Eye disorders

Some patients report altered vision e.g. seeing flashing lights or halos, irritation or discomfort. If you experience any of these, please contact the Christie Hotline.

### • Urinary symptoms

A feeling of an irritated bladder, a need to pass urine frequently or urgently can occur. Please drink plenty; we may request a urine sample to exclude infection.

- **Tiredness**

Vandetanib may make you feel tired and lacking in energy, but it should not affect your daily routine. Try to take rest and get help with household chores. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

### **Less common side effects (less than 1 in 10)**

- **Irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias) (Warning!)**

Vandetanib may cause an irregular heart rhythm. We will perform a heart tracing before you begin taking your medication and we will repeat this at every clinic appointment. If you experience any palpitations, chest pain, fainting or profound dizziness please seek urgent medical attention. Please stop taking your tablets until a doctor has reviewed you.

- **Chest pain or stroke (Warning!)**

A small number of patients receiving vandetanib may experience chest pain (angina) or, rarely, have a heart attack. Other complications such as a stroke or mini-stroke can also happen but are rare. If you develop chest pain or sudden onset of neurological symptoms such as headaches, disturbances in your vision, confusion or seizures, you should seek emergency medical attention.

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

- **Increased risk of serious infection (Warning!)**

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, if you have symptoms of an infection or if your temperature is 37.5°C or above, or below 36°C contact The Christie Hotline straight away.**

- **Bowel perforation**

Very rarely, vandetanib can cause a small hole (perforation) in your bowel. If you experience severe abdominal pain, vomiting blood or passing dark (black) stools then please seek emergency medical attention.

- **Stevens-Johnson Syndrome**

This is very rare. It is a severe reaction to your medication that causes ulcers, blistering and peeling of the skin and surfaces of the eyes, mouth and throat. It may be associated with a cough which produces a thick sputum, headache and joint pain. You should contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** or seek emergency medical care.

- **Neurological (brain) disorder**

Vandetanib can cause a rare condition affecting the brain, called Reversible Posterior Leukoencephalopathy Syndrome (RPLS). If you experience headaches, disturbances in your vision, confusion or seizures then please seek urgent medical attention.

### **Serious and potentially life-threatening side effects**

In a small proportion of patients, anti-cancer therapy 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.

## Late side effects

Some 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.

## 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 treatment. This treatment is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any 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 treatment 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.

## Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please contact the thyroid team:

Administration enquiries - **0161 446 3331**

Clinical nurse specialist, Debbie Elliott - **0161 446 8041**

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 **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