

Sunitinib (Sutent®) for renal tumours

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. Sunitinib (Sutent®) 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 Sunitinib (Sutent®). Sunitinib is given by mouth as capsules once a day for 4 weeks, followed by a 2 week break (a cycle). This cycle can be repeated for as long as you are benefitting from the treatment and the side effects are tolerated.

Your capsules should be taken daily at about the same time every day. Timing is not dependent on meals and it is better to take the tablets in the evening/night. If you miss a dose:

1. and it is more than 12 hours until your next dose, take the missed dose and continue with your normal schedule
2. and it is less than 12 hours until your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue with your normal schedule.

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

Some medicines interact with Sunitinib, either making it less effective or more likely to cause side effects. Please check with your GP and pharmacist that any new medicines are safe, or contact us. Drugs which should be avoided include itraconazole, fluconazole, clarithromycin, erythromycin, high dose steroids and warfarin. If you are in any doubt you should contact The Christie. Please do not drink any grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit while you are taking Sunitinib. St John's Wort should also be avoided.



Possible side effects

Sunitinib can cause different side effects in different people. 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)

• Hypertension (high blood pressure)

This is common but can usually be controlled by adding to or changing anti-hypertensive medication. It is very rare for patients to experience any serious heart problems. Your blood pressure will be monitored at every hospital visit.

• Diarrhoea

Mild diarrhoea is common. Anti-diarrhoeal tablets (loperamide) can be purchased over the counter from your local pharmacy or obtained free of charge on prescription from your GP to control your symptoms. Severe diarrhoea is less common. Severe diarrhoea can stop you eating, or make you dehydrated, which can make you feel weak and dizzy. If the diarrhoea is severe or persistent contact The Christie Hotline.

• Indigestion and nausea

Some patients experience indigestion which can be treated with tablets. Some patients also have a reduced appetite. Patients also experience loss of taste. Your sense of taste should return during your two-week break.

• Headache

You may get headaches whilst having this treatment. They should be relieved by taking paracetamol. If they become a problem, speak to your doctor.

• Mucositis (sore mouth and mouth ulcers)

Sunitinib can cause a sore mouth and ulcers. Usually this is mild and responds to mouth washes. If it is severe enough to stop you eating and drinking normally, please contact The Christie Hotline.

• Hand/foot skin reaction

Some people can experience reddening and peeling on the hands and feet. Simple moisturisers can help if this is mild, but if it interferes with walking or normal activities, please contact The Christie Hotline.

• Hypothyroidism

We screen for this as it is quite common for patients who stay on Sunitinib to have abnormal thyroid function tests. If your tests are abnormal you may be prescribed thyroid hormone replacement tablets to correct this. If left untreated this would make you tired and more sensitive to the cold.

• Tiredness

Sunitinib may make you feel tired and lacking in energy, but we would not expect you to be in bed during the daytime. Try to take rest and get help with household chores. If necessary take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial. Taking your tablets at bedtime can help.

• Insomnia

You may have difficulty in sleeping. If this is a problem speak to your doctor.

• Delayed wound healing

Sunitinib also delays wound healing. The tablets will usually have to be stopped before and after surgery or dental extraction, and should not usually be taken if you have an open wound, leg ulcer or pressure sore. Let your nurse or doctor know if any of these issues come up.

- **Hair depigmentation/skin discolouration**

It is common for your hair to turn white. This can be reversible when you stop taking Sunitinib. Some patients have a change in skin tone, which is not cause for concern.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Increased risk of bleeding**

Sunitinib can make you prone to bleeding. You may have bruising or bleeding, for example, from the nose, gums or in the urine. Contact The Christie if this occurs. A small number of patients have experienced serious bleeding complications.

- **Blood clots (Warning!)**

During this treatment you are more at risk of blood clots in the legs (DVT) or lungs (PE). Occasionally these clots can be life-threatening. To help prevent clots, keep mobile and drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.

- **Anaemia**

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Let your nurse or doctor know if these symptoms are a problem. You may need a blood transfusion.

- **Nausea and vomiting**

This is not a common problem but, if this does occur, you can be prescribed some anti-sickness tablets by your doctor.

- **Rash**

Sunitinib will make you more sensitive to the sun and can cause a rash. If this is widespread, please contact The Christie. More rarely some patients can develop a similar rash in the groin.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

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.

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 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.

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.

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**

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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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