

## Sunitinib

### For pancreatic neuroendocrine tumours

Sunitinib is a type of anti-cancer treatment called a targeted therapy. The aim of this treatment is to slow down the progression of 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. Sunitinib is taken by mouth as capsules once a day and is taken every day without a break. This treatment can be repeated for as long as you are benefitting from it 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 capsules in the evening/at bedtime. 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.

Store your medicine in a cool, dry place, out of reach of children.

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, diltiazem, verapamil, rifampicin, rifabutin, carbamazepine, warfarin and phenytoin also avoid live vaccines. If you are in any doubt you should contact The Christie Hotline on the number above.

**Please do not eat grapefruit, Seville oranges, or star fruit or drink their juices whilst 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. If side effects are severe, you may need to stop your caplets, have a longer break from treatment, or have a dose reduction. A small number of people do not tolerate this treatment.

## 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 your anti-hypertensive medication. It is very rare for patients to experience any serious heart problems. If you experience prolonged headaches and/or dizziness, please report this to your Christie doctor.

### • Diarrhoea

Mild diarrhoea is common. Anti-diarrhoeal capsules (loperamide) can be prescribed by 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

Some patients experience indigestion which can be treated with tablets. Some patients also have a reduced appetite but we would not expect you to lose weight.

### • 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.

### • Hand/foot skin reaction

Some people can experience reddening and peeling of the skin on the hands and feet. Simple moisturisers can help if this is mild, but if it interferes with walking or normal use of hands or fingers, please contact The Christie Hotline and report this to your doctor at the next clinic visit.

### • Hypothyroidism

This means that your thyroid gland may become underactive. We check for this regularly 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 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 capsules at bedtime can help.

### • Delayed wound healing

Sunitinib also delays wound healing. **The capsules 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.

- **Anaemia**

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

- **Hair and skin depigmentation**

It is common for your hair to turn white and for your skin to become more pale than usual. This is usually 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)**

- **Prone to 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.

- **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. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a high factor sunblock cream. If the rash or skin reaction to sunlight is widespread over your body, please contact The Christie Hotline.

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

- **Increased risk of serious infection**

You are vulnerable to infection while you are having sunitinib. 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 to 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**

Chemotherapy nurse - **0161 918 7171**

Clinical trials unit - **0161 918 7663**

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 **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