

## Alectinib (Alecensa®)

Alectinib 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 treatment will be fully explained by your doctor or nurse, who will be happy to answer any questions.

You may find it useful to refer to the booklet 'Chemotherapy - a guide' which gives general information about staying well during anti-cancer treatments,

### Your treatment

Your doctor has prescribed you an anti-cancer treatment called Alectinib (Alecensa®) which is a capsule and is taken by mouth.

The usual dose is 600 mg taken twice a day (morning and afternoon/evening). The capsule should be swallowed whole with water and taken with food. Do not crush, dissolve or open the capsules. If you miss a dose, do not take the missed dose, but continue with the next dose as prescribed. This dose may be reduced by your medical team if you experience severe side effects.

While you are taking Alectinib we will review you in clinic on a regular basis. This will be every two weeks initially and then monthly follow-up. Please tell your doctor about any other medications or herbal remedies you are taking as these may reduce the effectiveness of Alectinib.

### **We strongly advise current smokers to stop smoking while taking this treatment.**

If you would like help with stopping smoking please let your doctor or nurse know and they can arrange support for you.

You will have a routine blood test before the start of each cycle of treatment.

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.



## 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 two vaccinations. However, if you're thinking of having any other vaccinations, do check with your Christie doctor first, because some vaccines should be avoided.

## Possible side effects

This treatment 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 (may affect 1 or more in 10 people)

### • 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. Occasionally some patients report they have lost their sense of taste during treatment.

### • 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 on 0161 446 3658.

### • Shortness of breath (pneumonitis) (Warning!)

This treatment can cause inflammation of the tissue in your lungs. Symptoms of this include a cough that will not settle, fever or breathing difficulties. **If you develop severe shortness of breath it is important to contact The Hotline on 0161 446 3658 straight away as this may be serious. Don't delay!**

### • Cardiac abnormalities

Sometimes Alectinib can cause patients to experience an irregular or abnormal heartbeat or changes in the usual electrical activity of the heart as seen on an ECG (electrocardiogram). If you experience dizziness or any loss of consciousness you must inform your medical team or nurse. It is important not to drive or operate machinery if these symptoms occur.

### • Visual disturbances

You may develop problems with your vision. These are often temporary difficulties adjusting to light and then dark surroundings or blurring of your vision. You may also experience 'flashing lights' or 'floaters' in your visual field. These side effects are usually mild. If these side effects worsen you need to inform your doctor or nurse. If your vision is affected you should not drive or operate machinery.

### • Muscle pain, tenderness and weakness

Muscle problems are common with Alectinib and can be severe. Your doctor will do regular blood tests during treatment. Tell your doctor or specialist nurse right away if you get new or worsening signs and symptoms of muscle problems, including unexplained muscle pain or muscle pain that does not go away, tenderness, or weakness.

- **Lethargy**

Some treatment 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 a daily walk can be beneficial.

- **Decreased appetite**

You may lose your appetite and find eating large meals more difficult. It is best to try to eat smaller portions but do carry on trying to eat something even if you do not feel very hungry. Ask your nurse or doctor for advice on what to eat if this is causing you problems or you have unexpected weight loss.

- **Nausea and vomiting**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication will be given along with your treatment if needed. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or The Christie Hotline.

- **Constipation**

This occasionally occurs in the long-term. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Tell your doctor who may prescribe a suitable laxative. Ask the staff for a copy of 'Eating: help yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Diarrhoea**

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, anti-diarrhoea tablets can be bought from a pharmacy or prescribed by your GP for a temporary period until this is resolved. If the problem persists contact The Christie. If you develop severe diarrhoea it is important to contact The Christie straightaway as this may be a sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!

- **Skin rash**

You may develop a skin rash. This is usually mild and easily treated. It is most common on the face, neck, chest, and back. If the rash becomes red, painful, itchy or develops an 'acne-like' appearance please contact The Christie. Sometimes the dose may need to be changed or delayed for a week or two. If you develop any signs that the rash is infected then the medical team will start a course of antibiotics.

- **Being careful in the sun (photosensitivity)**

You must avoid spending time in the sunlight during treatment as your skin may burn more easily. You should use a high factor sun cream and lip balm (SPF 50 or above) that protects you from both UVA and UVB sunlight. This will help protect against sunburn.

- **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.

- **Hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar)**

An increase in your blood sugar levels may occur. People who have diabetes are at higher risk. Your blood sugar levels should be monitored regularly. If you start urinating often and notice an increased thirst you should contact your doctor or nurse.

- **Abnormal kidney and liver function tests**

It is important to monitor how your kidneys and liver are working as there may be a mild impairment while you are having treatment. This is done by routine blood tests. It is important to drink plenty of fluids while taking this medication. Please inform your medical team or nurse straight away if you notice you have a significantly decreased urine flow, darker urine than usual, itchy skin, pain to the right side of your abdomen, excessive bleeding or bruising or any yellowing of your skin or eyes.

- **Leg swelling or oedema**

This is often mild and can be relieved by putting your feet up and resting for part of the day. If you notice the swelling is severe or causing discomfort then please inform your medical team or nurse.

- **Increased risk of serious infection**

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 treatment 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.

- **Chest pain (Warning!)**

If you experience chest pain or notice a change in your regular heartbeat please tell your doctor or nurse. Please inform your doctor if you have ever been diagnosed with any type of heart disease especially an abnormal heart rhythm. Report any episodes of fast or irregular heartbeat, very slow heartbeat chest pain, lightheadedness, dizziness, fainting, or shortness of breath to your doctor straight away. In an emergency you should go immediately to your nearest accident and emergency department.

## **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 on 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. If you have any concerns about your fertility, please discuss this with your doctor or nurse clinician before you start treatment. You should not take Alectinib if you are pregnant.

### **Breastfeeding**

It is not known if Alectinib passes in to breast milk. Do not breastfeed whilst taking Alectinib.

## **Late side effects**

Some side effects may become evident only after a long time. 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 apply 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 the area where you are having treatment:

- Secretarial / administration enquiries - **0161 446 3745** or **0161 446 8016**

- Lung cancer nurse team - **0161 918 2595**

**For urgent 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 or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



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urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week