

## Pomalidomide

The possible benefits of this treatment vary: for some people chemotherapy may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others chemotherapy may control the cancer and its symptoms. You will find it useful to refer to the booklet *Chemotherapy: a guide* that gives general information on chemotherapy and side effects. Your treatment will be fully explained by your doctor or nurse, who will be happy to answer any questions.

### Your treatment

Your doctor has prescribed for you a tablet treatment for your myeloma. This treatment consists of 2 types of tablets: Pomalidomide and dexamethasone

These tablets are given in cycles, each cycle lasting 28 days.

**Pomalidomide:** belongs to a group of drugs called immune-modulatory agents. The tablet is taken for 21 days with a 7 day rest period (28 day cycle). It is important to drink plenty of fluids when taking this tablet as it can affect the kidney function.

**Dexamethasone:** steroid tablets taken once a week. Dexamethasone should be taken with food. It is better to take them earlier in the day, for example, with breakfast and lunch, since they can keep you awake if taken late in the day.

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.

Alongside your chemotherapy, you will be given other medications to prevent side effects. Please see the separate sheet entitled *Supportive Medications* for details on these medicines.

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



## Sex, contraception and fertility (Warning!)

Pomalidomide can cause birth defects in developing babies.

You will have to take part in a pregnancy prevention programme while taking pomalidomide, even if you do not think you are at risk of getting pregnant or making someone pregnant.

The pregnancy prevention programme involves

- Being given counselling each time you receive Pomalidomide including use of contraception during treatment
- Women who have any chance of becoming pregnant **MUST** use 2 forms of birth control. Pregnancy tests are performed every 4 weeks before a new prescription of Pomalidomide can be issued.
- Pomalidomide can be present in semen, so male patients must use a condom whenever they have sexual intercourse, even if they have had a vasectomy.
- You will be given a prescription authorisation form (PAF) which will enable you to collect your medication from pharmacy. Without this form pharmacy will not be able to release your medication to you.

## Possible side effects

Chemotherapy can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. We are all different, so we may get different side effects with varying severity. 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)

#### • 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.

#### • Bruising or bleeding

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Let 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.

#### • Nausea and vomiting (sickness)

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

#### • 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 this hospital. **If you develop severe diarrhoea it is important to contact this hospital straightaway as this may be a sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!**

#### • Fatigue/drowsiness

Pomalidomide can increase tiredness. This can be reduced by taking the medicine at bedtime. If the tiredness becomes excessive, please contact the myeloma nurse specialist or your doctor.

#### • Constipation

It is very common to become constipated with pomalidomide. 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 The Christie booklet 'Eating: help yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Tingling and numbness in the fingers or toes (peripheral neuropathy)**

Pomalidomide can cause nerve damage. This causes numbness or pins and needles in your fingers or toes. **It is important to tell us if this happens** as the dose of Pomalidomide may have to be reduced or stopped.

This is only usually mild and temporary, but sometimes lasts for some time or may become permanent. Please report these symptoms promptly to the myeloma nurse specialist or to your doctor.

- **Blood clots/thrombosis**

There is an increased risk of developing blood clots with **pomalidomide**. You are likely to be prescribed an anti-clotting agent such as aspirin or a heparin injection to help prevent blood clots forming. Please report immediately to us if you develop a red and swollen leg or sudden onset of shortness of breath.

- **Skin rash**

Occasionally you may develop a rash with pomalidomide. This often occurs within the first 2 to 6 weeks of starting therapy, and usually resolves itself. If you develop a rash, please let us know.

## **Steroid side effects**

Your **dexamethasone tablets** should be taken with food as they may cause indigestion. They may also increase your appetite. It is better to take them earlier in the day, for example, with breakfast and lunch, since they can make you feel more alert and prevent sleep.

Dexamethasone tablets can **alter your mood** causing you to feel low, irritable or agitated. Please tell the doctor at your next clinic visit if this is a problem.

- **Blood sugar**

Dexamethasone can 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. Dexamethasone can also induce diabetes in people not known to have this disease. This is normally reversible although you may need to take some diabetic medication while you are having chemotherapy.

## **Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)**

- **Hair thinning**

It is uncommon to lose hair with this treatment although it may thin a little. It is advisable to avoid perms, colours, use of hot brushes and vigorous, frequent washing that could increase hair loss. Please remember that this is a temporary side effect and your hair will grow back when your treatment is completed.

The cancer information centre offers a coping with hair loss service to all patients where support, information and advice will be given. Drop in, contact **0161 446 8100** or email **informationcentre@christie.nhs.uk**. Information about the wig service can also be found here and vouchers for wigs can also be obtained for eligible patients. The wig room provides a drop in service, please see The Christie leaflet 'The wig fitting service' for further information.

The Maggie's Centre runs a Talking Heads hair loss support workshop for anyone who is anticipating or 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**.

## 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 an increased chance 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.

- **Tingling and numbness in the fingers or toes:**

On rare occasions it may be permanent.

## Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please contact the myeloma nurse specialist or the Haematology and transplant unit.

- Myeloma nurse specialist on **0161 918 7962**
- Haematology and transplant unit on **0161 446 3925**
- General enquiries on **0161 446 3000**

Your consultant is:	
Your hospital number is:	
Your key worker is:	

# POMALIDOMIDE Treatment Chart

Day:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
<b>Date:</b>																												
<b>Cycle 1</b>																												
<b>Cycle 2</b>																												
<b>Cycle 3</b>																												
<b>Cycle 4</b>																												
<b>Cycle 5</b>																												
<b>Cycle 6</b>																												
<b>Pomalidomide Dose:</b>																												
<b>Dexamethasone Dose:</b>																												
<b>Dalteparin Dose:</b>																												
<b>Other medicines:</b>																												
Co-trimoxazole tablets 960mg once a day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday																												
Fluconazole 50mg capsules once daily																												
Aciclovir 400mg twice a day																												

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.



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