

CVD (Cyclophosphamide, Vincristine and Dacarbazine)

The possible benefit of this treatment is that it may control the cancer and its symptoms. Chemotherapy is the most commonly prescribed anti-cancer treatment but other types of treatment are also used. Your doctor will explain to you whether you will receive chemotherapy or another type of treatment, or a combination of both. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions. You will find it useful to refer to the booklet *Chemotherapy: a guide* which gives general information on chemotherapy and side effects.

Your treatment

Your doctor or nurse clinician has prescribed a treatment for you known as Cyclophosphamide/Vincristine/Dacarbazine or CVD.

- Day 1** Cyclophosphamide is given via intravenous (IV) bolus.
Vincristine is given via IV infusion (drip) over 5-10 minutes.
Dacarbazine is given as an IV infusion which lasts for 60 minutes.
- Day 2** Dacarbazine is given as an IV infusion which lasts 60 minutes.

You will have treatment every 4 weeks for up to 6 cycles.
You will have a routine blood test before the start of each cycle of treatment.

Occasionally for a number of reasons you may not be able to go ahead with your treatment. If this happens, your chemotherapy may be put back (deferred) a week.
Immediate effects: Cyclophosphamide can cause a feeling of giddiness or dizziness, a metallic taste in the mouth, a feeling of numbness or pressure in the sinuses and a cold sensation along the course of the vein. This can last for an hour or so following treatment. Please tell your nurse if this happens.

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.

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.



- **Herbal medicine**

Some herbal medicine including St John's Wort can affect the chemotherapy. You should let your doctor or nurse know if you are taking any herbal medication, complementary or alternative medicines, including vitamins, minerals and medicines purchased over-the-counter.

Possible side effects

Chemotherapy 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 (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.

- **Fatigue (tiredness)**

Some chemotherapy regimens 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 walking can be beneficial.

- **Vein pain**

This chemotherapy can cause pain along the vein during and after treatment. This should only be temporary, but contact your hospital doctor or nurse if this becomes severe.

- **Loss of appetite**

Your appetite may be reduced. A dietitian or specialist nurse at The Christie can give you advice and tips on boosting appetite, coping with eating difficulties and maintaining weight. Ask staff for a copy of The Christie booklet 'Eating – help yourself'.

- **Irritation of the bladder**

Cyclophosphamide may irritate your bladder. It is important to drink as much fluid as you can (up to two litres a day) on the days you have the cyclophosphamide and the day afterwards to help prevent this. Tell your doctor if you have any discomfort when you pass urine.

- **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 The Christie, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

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

This is usually only mild and temporary. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit. Rarely, this may be permanent.

- **Steroid side-effects**

Your dexamethasone tablets (taken to help prevent sickness) 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.

These 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.

Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **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.

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.

- **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 straight away as this may be a sign of a serious infection. Don't delay.**

- **Constipation**

This occasionally occurs with the drug vincristine. It is important to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. If you feel constipated 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.

- **Flu-like symptoms**

Some chemotherapy may cause flu-like symptoms such as aches and pains and shivering about 3 to 5 hours after it is given. These symptoms are temporary and should go within 12 to 24 hours. Paracetamol will help. If your symptoms are particularly severe, tell your doctor on your next visit.

- **Hair loss**

Some hair loss may occur during treatment. 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**.

- **Sensitivity to the sun**

Some chemotherapy can make your skin more sensitive to the sun than usual. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a sunblock cream.

- **Hyperpigmentation**

Your skin may appear darker in colour or lightly tanned, especially around the joints. This is known as hyperpigmentation. Asian and African-Caribbean people may develop noticeable light patches on their skin. The skin will return to normal when treatment is finished.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Immediate allergic reactions**

Ask the staff for help if you notice any of the following:

- Some people have hot flushes when the drugs are being given.
- Fevers and chills: back pain, shortness of breath, headaches and swelling of the face may occur during the time the drug is being given. If this happens please tell the staff straightaway. Your doctor may prescribe a drug that can help to reduce these side-effects and, if necessary, we can give you this before your next treatment.

- **Extravasation**

Extravasation is when chemotherapy leaks outside the vein. If you develop redness, soreness or pain at the injection site at any time, please let us know straightaway.

- **Kidney function**

Some chemotherapy can affect your kidneys. We will monitor how your kidneys are working while you are having treatment.

Serious and potentially life threatening side effects

In a small proportion of patients chemotherapy 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.

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.

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.

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 **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