

## BEP – 5 Days

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 has prescribed for you a treatment known as 5 Day BEP.

Your treatment consists of the following:

**Days 1 to 5** Etoposide and Cisplatin via a drip over 1 hours  
**Days 2, 12 and 19** Bleomycin via a drip over 30 minutes

In addition to the chemotherapy, we will also give you intravenous hydration (fluids). Your treatment will take approximately 6 hours each day. This is repeated every 3 weeks for 3 or 4 cycles.

You will have a routine blood test before the start of each cycle of treatment. Occasionally we may not be able to go ahead with your treatment until your blood counts are back to a safe level. If this happens, your chemotherapy may be delayed a week.

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.



## Flu vaccinations

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.

## COVID-19 vaccinations

We advise that all patients receive a COVID-19 vaccination when this is offered. Your doctor will discuss with you the best time to have this.

## Possible side effects

### 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 will 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.

- **Lethargy**

Some chemotherapy 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.

- **Tinnitus and high frequency hearing loss**

You may develop tinnitus (ringing in the ears), this sensation should subside when your treatment finishes. Please tell your doctor if this occurs. High frequency hearing loss can also occur with this chemotherapy, this may be permanent.

- **Hair loss**

Hair loss is usually total. The hair falls out gradually 10 to 14 days following your first course of treatment. The time scale varies from person to person. Please remember that this is a temporary side effect, and your hair will grow back when your treatment is completed. Very rarely, hair loss can be permanent.

The cancer information centre offers practical and emotional support about hair loss for men and women. They will also advise about headwear and access to the wig service. Drop in, contact **0161 446 8100/8107** or email [the-christie.informationcentre@nhs.net](mailto:the-christie.informationcentre@nhs.net). It is a good idea to get your wig before you lose a lot of hair which you can then match to your natural colour.

- **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 mouthcare information in The Christie chemotherapy booklet. If you continue to have a sore mouth, please contact The Christie Hotline.

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

### • 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 on 0161 446 3658 as this may be a sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!**

### • 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.

### • Skin changes

**If the skin on your hands and feet becomes sore and fingertips dry and cracked, contact The Christie straightaway.** Tablets and cream can be prescribed to help you. Also, try and keep your hands and feet cool and if possible uncovered, or wear loose-fitting cotton socks. You may also develop **ridging of the nails**, this will go when treatment finishes. **Some chemotherapy can make your skin more sensitive to the sun than usual.** Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a high factor sunblock cream. Asian and African-Caribbean people may develop noticeable light patches on their skin.

### • Tingling and numbness in the fingers or toes.

This is only usually mild and temporary but sometimes lasts for some time or may become permanent. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

### • Flu-like symptoms

Bleomycin may cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, aches and pains and shivering about 3 to 5 hours after it is given. These symptoms should be 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.

### • Kidney function

Some chemotherapy such as cisplatin can affect your kidneys. It is important to monitor how your kidneys are working while you are having treatment. It is important to drink plenty of fluids both before and after your chemotherapy to ensure you stay hydrated which in turn will help your kidneys.

### • Cardio toxicity (Warning!)

Although uncommon, this treatment can cause problems with the blood supply to the heart such as a heart attack or angina; or can cause palpitations or an irregular heartbeat. If you experience chest pain/tightness/heaviness or you feel clammy, or the pain travels up into your neck or down your arm you must ring 999 or go immediately to your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

### • Lung function (Warning!)

Bleomycin may cause some changes to your lung tissue. You may not be aware of these changes but because of this potential side effect, we will test your lung function both before and after your treatment. Please report any cough or breathlessness to your doctor without delay.

### • 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.

- **Allergic reaction**

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

- Some people have hot flushes when the drug is 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 can prescribe a drug that can help to reduce these side effects and if necessary, we can give you this drug before your next treatment.

## **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.

## **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.

- **Blood clots (Warning!)**

People with cancer are at a higher risk of developing blood clots. The medical name for this is a thromboembolism or a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). The most common place to develop a clot is in the leg.

You must contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** immediately if you experience any of the following:

- Pain, redness and swelling of your arm or leg(s). The area may feel warm to touch.
- Breathlessness, pain in your chest or upper back, light headedness, coughing up blood.

**For any chest pain, please call 999 immediately.**

You can help to prevent a clot by taking regular short walks to keep the blood moving, do simple exercises such as bending and straightening your toes every hour if you are unable to move around much and drink plenty of fluids. Most clots can be treated successfully using drugs to help thin the blood (anticoagulants).

## **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:

Macmillan urology CNS - **0161 918 7328**

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