

Patient information Leaflet for Paclitaxel

It is a chemotherapy drug which is used for the treatment of breast, ovary, lung, head neck and some gastrointestinal tumors. Paclitaxel injection must be given in a hospital or medical facility under the supervision of a doctor who is experienced in giving chemotherapy medications for cancer.

Before Using It

Inform of any medical illness such as hepatitis (liver disease), heart disease diabetes, tingling or numbness of fingers and toes, low blood counts and platelets, pregnancy, breast feeding and **drug allergy**. The above information will be useful to adjust the dose of your medicine.

Please inform your doctor if you have a pacemaker installed/ heart rhythm disorder.

Please use some kind of birth control while you are on chemotherapy.

Please avoid using any ayurvedic or homeopathic preparation while on chemotherapy.

While Taking it.

Paclitaxel may interact with a number of drugs and supplements, which may either raise or lower the level of paclitaxel in your blood. Tell your doctor if you are taking any of the following:

TB drugs (rifampicin)

Anti-seizure drugs (Phenytoin/Phenobarbital/Carbamazepine)

Anti-fungals (Itraconazole/Ketoconazole)

Anti-depressants (fluoxetine)

For HIV, AIDS (ritonavir, nelfinavir, indinavir, efavirenz, nevirapine)

Warfarin as paclitaxel may increase its effect leading to bleeding.

Foods such as grape fruit or grape fruit juice.

How is it administered:

It is given by injection in a vein after dissolving in saline or dextrose solution. Usually given over three hours every three weekly. It is also given in smaller doses weekly infused over a shorter time (1 hour). You will be given steroids half an hour before this drug which will help to reduce allergic reactions. Also you will be given drugs (Ondansetron/Granisetron) to prevent and treat nausea and vomiting anticipated with this drug.

Mild reactions may consist of fever, chills, skin itching, or feeling flushed. More serious reactions happen rarely, but can be dangerous. Symptoms can include feeling lightheaded or dizzy (due to low blood pressure), chest tightness, and shortness of breath, back pain, or swelling of the face, tongue, or throat. Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you notice any of these symptoms during or after being given the drug. Also tell the nurse right away if you notice any redness, pain, or swelling at or near the IV site.

Possible side effects

You will probably not have most of the following side effects, but if you have any talk to your doctor or nurse. They can help you understand the side effects and cope with them. Each person's reaction to chemotherapy is different. Some people have very few side effects while others may experience more.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS: (> 10%)

- Low white blood cell count with increased risk of infection and anemia. (lowest counts are from 8-14 days after chemotherapy)
- Mild allergic reaction (fever, flushing, itching, rapid heart rate)
- numbness, tingling, or pain in the hands, feet, or elsewhere
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Hair loss, including hair on the face and body

This drug may cause damage to certain nerves in the body, which can lead to a condition called peripheral neuropathy. This can cause numbness, weakness, pain, burning, or tingling, usually in the hands or feet. These symptoms can get worse, so that you have trouble walking or holding things in your hands. Let your nurse/doctor know right away if you notice any of these symptoms. If your symptoms are severe enough, this drug may need to be stopped or the dose reduced until they get better.

LESS COMMON SIDE EFFECTS: (1-10%)

- Sores in the mouth or on the lips
- Muscle or joint pain
- Pain, redness or swelling at the infusion site
- Fever
- Weakness or Tiredness
- Altered taste/ Loss of appetite

RARE SIDE EFFECTS: (< 1%)

- Low platelet count and bleeding
- Serious allergic reaction
- Fluid retention in the body (swelling in hands or feet, weight gain, less urine output)
- Changes in heart rhythm or precipitation of any cardiac illness or angina.