Dacarbazine (DTIC)
Chemotherapy information for patients

How the drug is usually given: By vein (also called intravenous or “IV”)

Early side effects

- Nausea or upset stomach may occur, but there are medicines that can help prevent this side effect. These medicines are called “anti-emetics.” You will be given some of this medicine before you receive the chemotherapy and will continue it for a few days after. If the nausea continues after you take the medicine, call your doctor or nurse.

- In some cases, the medicine causes stinging or other discomfort in the area where it is being given. Please let your nurse know if this happens.

Later side effects

- Low blood counts (called “bone marrow suppression”) will happen about 14 days after the chemotherapy is given. This medicine may affect several different types of blood cells, including those that help the body fight infection (white cells) and those that help the blood to clot (platelets). We will watch your blood counts carefully while you are on this treatment.

It is important for you to call your physician right away if you experience:

- fever of 100.5 F or above
- chills
- cough
- any signs of bleeding or unusual bruising

Because of low blood counts, please do not have any dental procedures or routine dental care without talking with your oncology doctor first. Also, please do not insert anything into the rectum (enemas, suppositories, etc.) because of the risk of infection in this area.

- Diarrhea (loose stools) can occur. The diarrhea can be mild or severe. Even an increase in cramps or softer stools may be a sign that diarrhea will develop. Please

Call your doctor if…
Remember, please call your doctor or nurse if you notice any of the following:

- nausea or vomiting not controlled with medication
- fever of 100.5 or more
- chills
- cough
- any signs of bleeding or unusual bruising
- abdominal cramps, diarrhea, or changes in stools
- stinging where you got the IV
- flu-like symptoms that do not get better with acetaminophen
- any other symptom that concerns you

Get help right away

Always call 911 for serious problems, such as chest pain, fainting, or trouble breathing.
let your doctor or nurse know if you have cramps, diarrhea, or changes in your stool. They will recommend treatment, which may include:

- drinking plenty of water
- avoiding drinks with caffeine
- when diarrhea is active, following a “BRAT” diet – bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast
- avoiding dairy products, such as milk, cheese, and yogurt
- taking medication to control symptoms (If needed, your doctor will recommend a medication that is right for you.)

- You may notice thinning of hair, but this is usually mild. Your hair will grow back after your chemotherapy treatments are finished.

- Your skin will be sensitive to the sun after treatment with this medicine. Avoid going out into the sun for prolonged periods. If you must be outdoors, please wear sunscreen.

- Slight fever and flu-like symptoms sometimes occur. You may have:
  - chills
  - muscle aches

You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) to control these symptoms. If this does not help, please call your nurse or doctor. (Never take more than the recommended dose of acetaminophen, as serious liver damage can result. Also, please note that many over-the-counter medicines, such as some cold remedies and pain relievers, contain acetaminophen. Do not take more than one product containing acetaminophen.)

- Fatigue is a common side effect of this medication. While you are undergoing treatment, try to plan rest into each day. Don’t schedule strenuous activities for these periods, and try to keep your schedule light. A small amount of regular, light exercise may help you keep your energy up. But don’t push yourself if you are too tired to exercise.

- Ability to have children may be affected by this medicine.
  - For women of childbearing age:
    - Periods may become irregular or may stop permanently.
    - It is possible to become pregnant, even if your periods have changed or stopped. It is important that women receiving this medicine do not become pregnant. Birth defects can occur. Please use birth control if you are sexually active.
    - Talk to your doctor or nurse if you are concerned about having children in the future.
For men:

- Production of sperm may stop or decrease. It is also possible that the cancer itself can affect sperm production, even without chemotherapy.
- **It is important that men receiving this medicine do not father a child.** Birth defects can occur. Please use birth control if you are sexually active. **It IS possible to cause pregnancy in your partner** while you are being treated.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse if you are concerned about having children in the future.

**Please remember**
Other side effects not listed here may occur. *Please tell your nurse or physician if you experience anything unusual.*

**Effects on other medicines**
While you are under treatment for your cancer, please make sure your doctor knows about all the medicines you are taking as there could be interactions. Let your doctor know about prescription medicines, non-prescription medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.

**Chemotherapy precautions**
This chemotherapy medicine will pass out of your body in your urine and/or stool (bowel movement). Small amounts may be also present in vomit. It’s best if others do not come in contact with the chemotherapy that may be present in these body wastes.

**For 48 hours** after receiving chemotherapy, please use the following precautions:

- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not handle your body waste for 48 hours after you receive the chemotherapy.
- You may use the toilet (septic tank or sewer) as usual, but flush twice with the lid closed and wash your hands well with soap and water afterward.
- If you lose control of your urine or bowel movement:
  - Wash your skin thoroughly after each soiling.
  - Soiled disposable pads or adult diapers should be placed in two plastic bags before being put in the trash.
  - Others should wear gloves when handling and disposing of your bodily wastes.
  - Wash soiled items separately from your regular laundry, then wash again with or without other items.

*Over →*
Important phone numbers

- My doctor: ___________________________
  - If you get your care on Shapiro 9:
    - Oncology clinic: 617-667-5167. You can use this number during regular business hours. Ask to speak with your nurse.
      - My nurse: ___________________
    - Beth Israel Deaconess page: 617-667-4700, ask for the medical oncology fellow on-call. Use this number on nights (after 5pm), weekends, and holidays.
  - If you are get your care on Shapiro 7:
    - BMT clinic: 617-667-9784. You can use this number during regular business hours. Ask to speak with your nurse.
      - My nurse: ___________________
    - Beth Israel Deaconess page: 617-667-4700, ask for the bone marrow transplant fellow on-call. Use this number on nights (after 5pm), weekends, and holidays.

Reference