

## Eribulin (Halaven®)

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people chemotherapy may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. 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 have about your treatment. 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 for you a treatment which includes the chemotherapy eribulin (also called Halaven®). Eribulin is given into the vein (intravenously) through a fine tube (cannula) as an infusion over 2 to 5 minutes.

### Treatment is given on Day 1 and Day 8 of a 21-day cycle.

You will have a routine blood test before the start of each 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 by a week.

You may be advised to have a line fitted to aid the delivery of your intravenous chemotherapy treatment. This will be organised by the clinic if it is required. Your **line needs to be been removed** after all your intravenous chemotherapy treatments have finished. If you have not received an appointment for this please contact the procedure team on **0161 446 3916**.

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.

### 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.

- **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.**

- **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.

- **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.

### **Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)**

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

This is due to the effect of the chemotherapy on the nerves and is known as peripheral neuropathy. You may also notice that you have difficulty doing up buttons or similar tasks. Tell your doctor if you notice any numbness or tingling in your hands or feet. This usually improves a few months after treatment has finished although this may be permanent.

- **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 at any point during your treatment, please contact The Christie Hotline for advice. **If you develop severe diarrhoea, it is important to contact the hospital on 0161 446 3658 straight away as this may be the sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!**

- **Constipation**

It is very common to become constipated. Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Ask the staff for a copy of Eating: help yourself which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Hair loss**

Your hair may thin, or you may lose hair from your head. This usually starts after your first or second cycle of chemotherapy. It is almost always temporary and your hair should grow back after your chemotherapy ends. Very rarely, hair loss may be

permanent. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you by visiting the cancer information centre. 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. Ask the staff for a copy of the 'Wig fitting service at The Christie'.

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**

- **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. You may benefit from additional support during your treatment. Gentle exercise, such as walking, can however be beneficial. Complementary therapies may be helpful. Speak to your nurse or doctor for further information.

- **Joint and muscle pain**

Pain in the joints (also called arthralgia) or muscles (also called myalgia) can be a temporary side effect while having chemotherapy. It is important to tell the doctor or nurse about this so that appropriate painkillers can be prescribed.

- **Decreased appetite and weight loss**

You may find that your appetite reduces. If this becomes a problem for you, speak to your doctor or nurse about any additional support that may help.

- **Headache**

You may experience headaches. If you have headaches, tell your doctor or nurse about this so that appropriate painkillers can be prescribed.

- **Fast heart rate/flushing**

Eribulin can cause changes in your heartbeat. If you feel there are any changes in your heart rate or you have palpitations, contact The Christie Hotline straight away.

- **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, contact The Christie Hotline.

- **Heartburn**

Chemotherapy treatment can cause indigestion and reflux. If you experience this please contact The Christie Hotline. Heartburn can be treated with medication from your GP.

- **Liver function**

Your liver may be temporarily affected. Eribulin may cause changes in the way that your liver works. Your doctor will monitor this carefully and check your bloods at each treatment.

- **Changes in nails**

Your nails may become brittle and their texture or colour may change. The changes in the nails should gradually grow out when the treatment has finished. The nail may also lift from the nail bed. If this happens, be very diligent with hand washing. Contact the hospital straight away if you notice any discharge or oozing from the nail. Acrylic nails are not recommended.

- **Strange taste**

Chemotherapy can often leave a strange, metallic taste in your mouth. It can also make food seem tasteless and bland. Normal taste will usually come back after the treatment finishes. Ask the staff for dietary booklets which you may find helpful.

- **For female patients only**

### **Loss of periods**

Due to the effect of chemotherapy on the ovaries, you may find that your periods become irregular or stop. This is more likely in women over the age of 40 when most women will notice some change in their periods. It is less common in women under the age of 40 but does still happen and can result in significant menopausal symptoms (see section below). Even if your periods stop completely during chemotherapy your periods may come back several years later. This means that you may be able to become pregnant even many years after chemotherapy. It is very important to use contraception if you don't want to get pregnant.

### **Menopausal symptoms**

When the ovaries stop working due to chemotherapy or during a natural menopause most women experience symptoms such as hot flushes, sweats (night and day) and vaginal dryness. These hormonal changes can make the vagina feel as though it has shrunk and become less easy to stretch. This is called vaginal atrophy and can result in discomfort, pain on sexual intercourse, itching and recurrent urine infections. If your ovaries don't start to work again the vaginal symptoms can be permanent, although the flushes and sweats tend to reduce and stop over a small number of years. Some women who have already gone through the menopause may notice their symptoms worsening for a time after chemotherapy.

The vaginal symptoms can start early and the longer they are left the harder they can be to treat. Please contact your specialist nurse either in clinic or by phone when the symptoms first develop if you would like help. Symptoms can be managed in several ways including gels, pessaries and sometimes local oestrogen replacement. You may also find it helpful to request the booklet 'Menopausal symptoms and breast cancer' by Breast Cancer Care (either from your breast care nurse, the cancer information centre at The Christie or online).

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

- **Dizziness**

Eribulin can cause dizziness. If you feel dizzy or unsteady do not drive or operate machinery.

- **Skin rash**

You may develop a skin rash. This is usually mild and easily treated. Please tell your doctor on your next visit to the hospital.

- **Increased sensitivity to the sun**

Your skin will tan/burn in the sun more easily. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use sunblock cream/hats.

- **Increased production of tears or soreness to the eyes**

If your eyes become sore or irritable, speak to your doctor about your symptoms.

- **Problems sleeping**

Your chemotherapy may affect your sleeping pattern. If this becomes a problem for you, speak to your doctor or nurse for advice.

- **Fluid retention**

The chemotherapy may cause fluid retention, so that your hands and feet become swollen. This will be temporary but if you experience this, contact your hospital doctor or nurse.

- **Flu-like symptoms & headaches**

Occasionally you may have a sore or runny nose during your treatment, or cold or flu-like symptoms.

- **Abdominal pain/swelling**

Chemotherapy can cause stomach pain (abdominal pain) and you may experience swelling or bloating in your stomach area (abdominal swelling). If you experience this, contact your hospital doctor or nurse for advice.

- **Respiratory symptoms/difficulty breathing**

You may find that you are short of breath, have difficulty breathing or develop a cough. If you experience these symptoms, contact your hospital doctor or nurse.

### **Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)**

- **ringing in the ears (tinnitus)**

If you develop this symptom, please tell your doctor.

- **Blood clots**

During chemotherapy you are more at risk of developing blood clots in the legs (deep vein thrombosis or DVT) or lungs (pulmonary embolism or PE). Occasionally these clots can be life-threatening. To help prevent clots, keep mobile and drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.

- **Pneumonia**

You are vulnerable to infections while you are having chemotherapy including pneumonia (chest infections). Symptoms of pneumonia include fever, cough and breathlessness. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should contact your hospital doctor or nurse.

- **Renal impairment**

Your kidneys may be temporarily affected. Eribulin may cause changes in the way that your kidneys work. Your doctor will monitor this carefully and check your bloods at each treatment.

- **Angioedema**

This is the swelling of the deeper layers of the skin and it is usually caused by a build-up of fluid. The swelling can be severe and it can affect any part of the body like the hands, feet, eyes, lips and genitals. Tell your doctor if you have any of these symptoms. Medications, such as antihistamine and oral steroids can be used to relieve the swelling.

- **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 straight away.

### **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.

**Other medicines:** Please ask your doctor at The Christie for advice about any other medication you are taking, including non-prescribed medicines, complementary therapies and herbal medicines.

## **Sex, contraception & 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 you should not try to become pregnant whilst you are having chemotherapy. Using a condom will also protect your partner from any chemotherapy drugs that may be present in the semen or 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**
- Breast care nurses                   **0161 446 3996**

For advice ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours)

Your consultant is: .....

Your hospital number is: .....

Your key worker is: .....

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.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most **up-to-date** scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact [patient.information@christie.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@christie.nhs.uk)

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For information about The Christie and our services, please visit [www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk) or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

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

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Wilmslow Road  
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[www.christie.nhs.uk](http://www.christie.nhs.uk)

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