

**Medication Information Sheet****irinotecan** (eye-reen-oh-TEE-can)

*This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.*

**Other Name:** Camptosar®

**Appearance:** Clear, light-yellow solution mixed into larger bags of fluids

**What is this medication for?**

- For treating cancer of the colon, rectum or other cancers

**What should I do before I have this medication?**

Tell your health care team if you have or had significant medical condition(s), such as:

- liver, heart or lung problems
- diabetes
- hereditary fructose intolerance or
- any allergies

**How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?**

- The use of this medication in men or women may cause harm to the unborn baby if pregnancy occurs. Let your health care team know if you or your partner is pregnant, becomes pregnant during treatment, or if you are breastfeeding
- If there is ANY chance that you or your partner may become pregnant, you and your partner together must:
  - ► **Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time** while receiving this drug: Keep using birth control until at least **6 months** after the last dose (general recommendation). Discuss with your healthcare team.
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug.
- This medication may affect fertility (ability to get pregnant)

**How is this medication given?**

- This drug is given by injection into a vein.
- Your doctor may tell you to use loperamide (Imodium®) for delayed diarrhea caused by irinotecan. In this case, ensure you have a supply of loperamide readily available, since diarrhea needs to be treated as soon as possible.
- Your healthcare team may ask you to follow these instructions for loperamide (Imodium®): For **delayed diarrhea (more than 24 hours after your irinotecan dose), at the first sign of loose bowel movements or when bowel movements are more frequent than usual, take 2 tablets (4mg) immediately, then take 1 tablet (2mg) every 2 hours. During the night you may take 2 tablets (4mg) every 4 hours.** Continue with loperamide until you are diarrhea-free for 12 hours. (Also see “Diarrhea (delayed onset)” under “Side effects and what to do” section.)

## What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- Do not eat or drink grapefruit, starfruit, Seville oranges or their juices (or products that contain these) while on this treatment. They may increase side effects.
- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- **For mild aches and pain or fever:**
  - If you feel unwell, take your temperature before taking any medications for pain or fever. They may hide a fever.
  - You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets. Ask your health care team about the right dose for you.
  - Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA), including low dose aspirin for heart conditions, may increase your chance of bleeding. Talk to your health care team before you start or stop these medications.
  - **Talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room right away if you have a fever.** See the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.
- Drinking alcohol and smoking during your treatment may increase some side effects and make your medication less effective. Speak to your health care team about smoking and drinking alcohol while on treatment.

## What are the side effects of this medication?

You may not have all of the side effects below. You may have side effects that are not listed.

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>More Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)</b>	
<p><b>Diarrhea (early onset)</b> and other <b>early side effects</b> of irinotecan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starts <b>during the infusion or within 24 hours</b></li> <li>• Some other symptoms include <b>excessive sweating, belly cramps, runny nose, watery eyes, more saliva in the mouth, face or neck flushing or pinpointed pupils.</b></li> <li>• <b>Let your healthcare team know right away if this happens.</b> Medication(s) may be given to you to control these symptoms</li> </ul> <p><b>Diarrhea (delayed onset)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Starts more than 24 hours to a few days</b> after your irinotecan dose.</li> <li>• May be severe in some cases with dehydration</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have diarrhea :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take anti-diarrhea drug(s) as instructed by your healthcare team. Refer to "How it is given" section for instructions on using loperamide (Imodium®)</li> <li>• Avoid foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (e.g. chewing gum, "diet" drinks), coffee and alcohol.</li> <li>• Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals.</li> <li>• Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day. Talk to your health care team if you can't drink 6-8 cups of liquids each day when you have diarrhea. You may need special liquids with salt and sugar, called Oral Rehydration Therapy.</li> <li>• <b>If diarrhea lasts more than 24 hours while taking anti-diarrhea drugs or if you have fever, get emergency medical help right away.</b></li> </ul> <p>See the <a href="#">Diarrhea</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe.</p> <p>If diarrhea lasts more than 24 hours while taking anti-diarrhea drugs or if you have fever, get emergency medical help right away.</p>
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b></p> <p>May occur in hours to days after your treatment. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it if it happens.</p> <p><b>To help prevent nausea:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your healthcare team if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting lasts more than 24 hours</p>

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>More Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest.</li> <li>• Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell.</li> <li>• Limit caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea) and alcohol.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have nausea or vomiting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor.</li> <li>• Contact your health care team if the prescribed anti-nausea medications are not helping to control your nausea and vomiting.</li> </ul> <p>Also see <a href="#">Nausea &amp; Vomiting</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	
<p><b>Fatigue (tiredness)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active and aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days. Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise.</li> <li>• Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to.</li> <li>• Eat well and stay hydrated by drinking at least 6 to 8 glasses of water or other liquids every day (unless your doctor told you to drink more or less).</li> <li>• Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired</li> </ul> <p>See our <a href="#">Fatigue</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Hair thinning or loss</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a gentle soft brush and avoid hair sprays, bleaches, dyes and perms.</li> <li>• In most cases, your hair will grow back after treatment, but the texture or colour may change.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if this bothers you
<p><b>Pains or cramps in the belly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have constipation or diarrhea it may be causing the pain in your belly.</li> <li>• If the pain is severe, gets worse or doesn't go away, talk to your health care team about other possible causes.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Low appetite</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may not feel like eating or you may lose weight.</li> <li>• Try to eat foods that you like and eat small meals throughout the day.</li> <li>• You may need to take meal supplements to help keep your weight</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>More Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)</b>	
<p>up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to your health care team if you have a low appetite.</li> <li>• See our <a href="#">Loss of appetite</a> pamphlet for more information.</li> </ul>	

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)</b>	
<p><b>Constipation (less common than diarrhea)</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent constipation :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink more liquids and eat well. Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day unless you have been told otherwise.</li> <li>• Be Active. Exercise can help to keep you regular.</li> <li>• Try to eat more fiber (e.g. fruits with skin, leafy greens and whole grains). If you take opioid pain medication, ask your health care team if eating more fibre is right for you.</li> </ul> <p><b>To help treat constipation :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have not had a bowel movement in 2 to 3 days you may need to take a laxative. Ask your health care team what to do.</li> </ul> <p>See the <a href="#">Constipation</a> Pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p><b>Low platelets in the blood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for bleeding (such as unusual nosebleeds or bleeding from the gums) or bruising easily (this is rare).</li> <li>• Very rarely, severe symptoms can happen. If you notice black coloured stools (poo), red or pink coloured urine (pee), red or brown coloured mucus when you cough, severe headache/confusion or bleeding that will not stop, you need to talk to your health care team or go to the nearest emergency room right away.</li> </ul> <p>See the <a href="#">Low Platelet Count</a> pamphlet for more information.</p> <p><b>Fever, chills, infection</b></p> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR</b></li> </ul>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>38.0°C (or 100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.</b></li> </ul> <p>While you are getting treatment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a digital thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills).</li> <li>• Avoid taking medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol®, acetaminophen, Advil® or ibuprofen) as they may hide a fever.</li> <li>• Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature.</li> <li>• Wash your hands often to prevent infection.</li> <li>• Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a fever, talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room.</b> See our <a href="#">Neutropenia (Low white blood cell count)</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)</b>	
<p><b>Cough; feeling short of breath</b></p> <p>You may have cough and feel short of breath without any signs of infection, such as a sore throat or a stuffed nose.</p> <p><b>Rarely this may be severe with chest pain, trouble breathing or coughing up blood. If this happens get medical help right away.</b></p>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Trouble falling asleep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This may be caused by one of your medications and may improve once your body gets used to the medication or when your treatment ends.</li> <li>• Talk to your doctor if this bothers you.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Headache; muscle pain or cramps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the right dose for you.</li> <li>Talk to your doctor or pharmacist first before taking ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin. These medication may increase bleeding risk.</li> <li>Rest often and try light exercise as it may help.</li> </ul>	severe
<p><b>Dizziness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may feel light headed.</li> <li>Lay down if this happens.</li> <li>Get up and move slowly once you feel better.</li> <li>Do not drive a motor vehicle or use machinery if you feel dizzy.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Abnormal liver lab tests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may have yellowish skin or eyes, unusually dark pee or pain on the right side of your belly. Talk to your health care team if this happens.</li> <li>Your doctor may monitor your liver regularly with a blood test.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Rash; dry, itchy skin</b></p> <p>Rash may be severe in some rare cases and cause your skin to blister or peel. If this happens, get emergency medical help right away.</p> <p><b>To prevent and treat dry skin,</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use skin moisturizer.</li> <li>Protect your skin from the sun and the cold.</li> <li>Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 30.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Mouth sores</b></p> <p>You may have round, painful, white or gray sores inside your mouth. They can occur on the tongue, lips, gums, or inside your cheeks. In more severe cases they may make it hard swallow, eat or to brush your teeth. They usually last 1 to 2 weeks.</p> <p><b>To help prevent mouth sores:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take care of your mouth by gently brushing and flossing regularly.</li> <li>Rinse your mouth often. Do not use mouthwashes with alcohol.</li> <li>Instead, try a homemade mouthwash:</li> <li>Mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team as soon as possible

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
<b>Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)</b>	
<p><b>If you have mouth sores:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to swallow.</li> <li>• Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods. Your doctor may prescribe a mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection.</li> </ul> <p>See the <a href="#">Mouth Care</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	
<p><b>Heartburn; stomach upset</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent heartburn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid fatty or spicy foods.</li> <li>• Remain upright after eating.</li> <li>• Drink clear liquids and eat small meals.</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p><b>Mild swelling in arms and legs; puffiness</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent swelling :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat a low-salt diet.</li> <li>• Avoid tight fitting clothing.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have swelling in your legs,</b> keep your feet up when sitting.</p>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe

**Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.**

**If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:**

- Swelling and hardening of a vein in your arms or leg
- Feel confused, trouble seeing, speaking, or using your arms or legs
- Severe or sudden belly pain, bloating or feeling of fullness and severe constipation
- Pain in the centre of your belly that may extend to your back
- Flushing, itchiness, rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, wheezing, chest and throat tightness
- Fever, severe joint pain; lower back pain, swelling, pee less than usual and have unusual weight gain; muscle twitching, severe weakness or cramping and feel confused

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to [www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms](http://www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms).

*The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.*

*A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.*