

Medication Information Sheet

PACLitaxel (pack-li-TAX-ell)

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: Generic brand(s) available, Taxol®

Appearance: Clear solution mixed into larger bags of fluids

What is this medication for?

- For treating breast, lung, ovarian and other cancers as well as Kaposi's sarcoma.

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have or had:
 - numbness or tingling in your hands or feet
 - heart or liver problems
 - low blood counts, or any allergies.
- People with cancer have a higher risk of getting other cancers or developing blood clots. Some cancer medications may increase these risks, especially if used for a long period of time. Discuss any concerns about this medication with your health care team.
- Paclitaxel contains a small amount of alcohol, and is given with allergy medications which may cause drowsiness. Avoid driving or operating machinery if you feel dizzy or drowsy after your treatment visit.

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 taking this drug. Do not take birth control pills if you have breast cancer. Keep using birth control until **6 months** after the last dose. Discuss with your healthcare team.
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug.

*The most updated version and more symptom control information can be found on: <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/druginfo>

Prepared with input from the Cancer Care Ontario-Medication Information Sheets Working Group.

December 2016

- This medication may affect fertility (ability to get pregnant)

How is this medication given?

- This drug is given by injection into a vein.
- Dexamethasone and other medications may be given to help prevent an allergic reaction (either by injection or tablets).
- If you are using tablets, it is very important to take the dexamethasone exactly as directed by your doctor.

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

- 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:
 - 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.
 - If you feel unwell, take your temperature before taking any of these medications. They may hide a fever.
 - **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? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Very Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people) | |
| <p>Hair thinning or loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle soft brush and avoid hair sprays, bleaches, dyes and perms. • In most cases, your hair will grow back after treatment, but the texture or colour may change. • In very rare cases, hair loss may be permanent | |
| <p>Tingling, numb fingers and toes (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May slowly get better after your treatment ends. • Contact your health care team if you have trouble doing up buttons, writing, picking up small objects, have pain or trouble moving. | Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe |
| <p>Mild joint, muscle pain or cramps (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor. • You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the right dose for you. • Talk to your doctor or pharmacist first before taking ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin. These medication may increase bleeding risk. • Rest often and try light exercise as it may help. | Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe |

| Side effects and what to do | When to contact doctor? |
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| Common Side Effects (25-49 out of 100 people) | |
| <p>Nausea and vomiting</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>To help prevent nausea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor. • Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest. • Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell. • Limit caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea) and alcohol. <p>If you have nausea or vomiting:</p> | Contact your healthcare team if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting lasts more than 24 hours |

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| Common Side Effects (25-49 out of 100 people) | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor. • Contact your health care team if the prescribed anti-nausea medications are not helping to control your nausea and vomiting. <p>Also see Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet for more information.</p> | |
| <p>Allergic reaction (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most common symptoms include fever, itchiness, rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, chest and throat tightness. • It may occur during or shortly after the medication is given to you. Let your health care team know right away if this happens to you. | <p>Get emergency medical help right away</p> |
| <p>Unusual bleeding or bruising (may be severe)</p> <p>You may have black stools, cough up blood, blood in your urine, purple or red dots on your skin or bleeding that will not stop.</p> <p>Fever, chills, infection</p> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR • 38.0°C (or 100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour. <p>While you are getting chemotherapy treatments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a digital thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills). • 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. • Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature. • Wash your hands often. • Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist. <p>If you have a fever, talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room.</p> <p>See our Neutropenia (Low white blood cell count) pamphlet for more information.</p> | <p>Get emergency medical help right away</p> |

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| Common Side Effects (25-49 out of 100 people) | |
| <p>Diarrhea</p> <p>May happen days to weeks after you get your treatment.</p> <p>If you have diarrhea :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it. • Avoid foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (e.g. chewing gum, “diet” drinks), coffee and alcohol. • Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals. • 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. <p>See the Diarrhea pamphlet for more information.</p> | <p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p> |

| Side effects and what to do | When to contact doctor? |
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| Less Common Side Effects (10-24 out of 100 people) | |
| <p>Abnormal liver lab tests (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Your doctor may monitor your liver regularly with a blood test. | <p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p> |
| <p>Mild swelling in arms and legs; puffiness</p> <p>To help prevent swelling :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a low-salt diet. • Avoid tight fitting clothing. <p>If you have swelling in your legs, keep your feet up when sitting.</p> | <p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p> |

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| Less Common Side Effects (10-24 out of 100 people) | |
| <p>Mouth sores</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 to swallow, eat or to brush your teeth. They usually last 1 to 2 weeks.</p> <p>To help prevent mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care of your mouth by gently brushing and flossing regularly. • Rinse your mouth often. Do not use mouthwashes with alcohol. • Instead, try a homemade mouthwash: • Mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water. <p>If you have mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to swallow. • Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods.. Your doctor may prescribe a mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection. <p>See the Mouth Care pamphlet for more information.</p> | <p>Contact your health care team as soon as possible</p> |
| <p>Fatigue (tiredness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to. • 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). • Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired <p>See our Fatigue pamphlet for more information.</p> | <p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p> |
| <p>Reactions at the injection site (may be severe)</p> <p>Watch for redness, itchiness, bruising, mild rash and/or swelling.</p> | <p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p> |

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:

- irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath or chest pain
- sudden, severe pain in your belly or arm
- sudden confusion, trouble speaking or difficulty moving your arms or legs
- coughing up blood or trouble breathing
- pain and swelling of a vein in your arm or leg
- any changes in your vision
- severe bloating or feeling of fullness
- belly pain that extends to your back
- passing out or seizure
- severe rash that causes your skin to blister or peel

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to www.cancercare.on.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.