



## For the Patient: Mechlorethamine injection

Other names: MUSTARGEN®

### BC Cancer Agency

- Mechlorethamine (me klor eth' a meen) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancer. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to mechlorethamine before taking mechlorethamine.
- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Other drugs may **interact** with mechlorethamine. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of mechlorethamine.
- Mechlorethamine may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with mechlorethamine.
- Mechlorethamine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with mechlorethamine. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with mechlorethamine before you receive any treatment from them.

#### Changes in blood counts

Mechlorethamine may cause temporary changes in your blood counts. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by performing blood tests. Adjustment of your treatment may be needed in certain circumstances.

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
Normal white blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. <b>When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.</b>	To help prevent infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom.</li> <li>• Avoid crowds and people who are sick.</li> <li>• Call your doctor <b>immediately</b> at the</li> </ul>

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
	first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury (e.g., cut). <b>When the platelet count is low, you may be more likely to bruise or bleed.</b>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try not to bruise, cut, or burn yourself.</li> <li>• Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose.</li> <li>• Avoid constipation.</li> <li>• Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily.</li> </ul> <p>Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g., <b>ASA for your heart</b>).</li> <li>• For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL) first, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.</li> </ul>

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Allergic reactions</b> may rarely occur. Signs of an allergic reaction may include flushing, rash, itching, dizziness, swelling or breathing problems.</p> <p>This can occur immediately or several hours after receiving mechlorethamine and usually only with the first or second dose.</p>	Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving mechlorethamine or contact your oncologist immediately if this happens after you leave the clinic.
Mechlorethamine <b>burns</b> if it leaks under the skin.	Tell your nurse or doctor <b>immediately</b> if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.
<b>Pain or tenderness</b> may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
You may notice a <b>metallic taste</b> as mechlorethamine is being given.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Cope with Taste and Smell Changes</i> . <sup>*</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chew gum, suck on candy, or have a strong flavoured drink to hide the taste.</li> </ul>
<b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur after your treatment and may last for 24 hours.	You will be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. <b>It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred</b> , so follow directions closely. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Help Control Nausea</i>.<sup>*</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Fever</b> may rarely occur shortly after treatment with mechlorethamine. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</li> <li>• Fever which occurs more than a few days after treatment may be the sign of an infection.</li> </ul>
<b>Diarrhea</b> may rarely occur.	If diarrhea is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Diarrhea During Chemotherapy</i>.<sup>*</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Loss of appetite</b> may rarely occur and may persist after discontinuation of mechlorethamine.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i> . <sup>*</sup>
<b>Hair loss is rare</b> with mechlorethamine. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with mechlorethamine. Colour and texture may change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush.</li> <li>• Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes, and perms.</li> </ul>

**\*Please ask your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist for a copy.**

### SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), shaking chills; cough, severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum); cloudy or foul smelling urine; painful, tender, or swollen red skin wounds or sores.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.

