



**BC Cancer Agency**

## **For the Patient: Protocol GIGECF**

Other names: Perioperative Treatment of Resectable Adenocarcinoma of the Stomach, Gastroesophageal Junction or Lower 1/3 of the Esophagus using Epirubicin, Cisplatin and Infusional Fluorouracil

**GI = Gastrointestinal**

**G = Gastric cancer**

**ECF = Epirubicin, Cisplatin, Fluorouracil**

### **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

This treatment is offered to patients who have operable cancer of the stomach or esophagus. It may prolong life, improve symptoms, and increases the chance of cancer cure compared with surgery alone

### **TREATMENT PLAN**

Your treatment will be given via **either** a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC Line) **or** PORT-A-CATH®.

- A PICC is inserted in your upper arm.
- A PORT-A-CATH® is inserted under the skin of the chest using local freezing. The insertion would be done several days before your treatment starts. It would be removed once the treatment program is finished.

### **Chemotherapy Drugs**

You will receive 3 intravenous (IV) chemotherapy drugs: Epirubicin, Cisplatin and Fluorouracil (5FU).

- The ***Epirubicin*** and ***Cisplatin*** are given at the clinic. The Epirubicin takes only a few minutes to give (usually 15-20 minutes). The Cisplatin is given after an hour of IV fluid and then will take an hour to run in.
- The ***5FU*** is given over 21 days using disposable infusion devices (Infusor) that allow the drug to be given continuously (24 hours a day) for the 21 days. The Infusor is connected to your IV site by a nurse at the clinic and then you can go home while your treatment is delivered over the next week. You will need to return to the clinic each week for a new Infusor.

In summary, your treatment will take about 2½ hours on the first day (Day 1) of each Cycle (a cycle is 21 days long) and then about 15 minutes each week to change your Infusor. Your first treatment will probably take longer.

## Treatment Outline

Three cycles of chemotherapy are given before and after surgery. That is, a total of 6 cycles of chemotherapy is planned.

**Chemotherapy** This continues for 9 weeks (3 cycles) before surgery.



**Surgery** This should take place within 3-6 weeks of the end of cycle 3 of chemotherapy.



**Chemotherapy** About 6-12 weeks after surgery, 9 more weeks (3 more cycles) of the same chemotherapy is given.



The calendar next page outlines your overall treatment plan.

## Treatment Calendar

DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	➤ <b>CYCLE 1 → Day 1</b> → Epirubicin Injection + IV Fluids followed by Cisplatin infusion + 5FU infusion begins
	<b>Days 2 - 7</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 8-14</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 15-21</b> → 5FU Infusion continues



DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	➤ <b>CYCLE 2 → Day 1</b> → Epirubicin Injection + IV Fluids followed by Cisplatin infusion + 5FU infusion begins
	<b>Days 2 - 7</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 8-14</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 15-21</b> → 5FU Infusion continues



DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	➤ <b>CYCLE 3 → Day 1</b> → Epirubicin Injection + IV Fluids followed by Cisplatin infusion + 5FU infusion begins
	<b>Days 2 - 7</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 8-14</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 15-21</b> → 5FU Infusion continues



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**\*\*\*SURGERY\*\*\***  
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DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	➤ <b>CYCLE 4 → Day 1</b> → Epirubicin Injection + IV Fluids followed by Cisplatin infusion + 5FU infusion begins
	<b>Days 2 - 7</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 8-14</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 15-21</b> → 5FU Infusion continues



DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	➤ <b>CYCLE 5 → Day 1</b> → Epirubicin Injection + IV Fluids followed by Cisplatin infusion + 5FU infusion begins
	<b>Days 2 - 7</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 8-14</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 15-21</b> → 5FU Infusion continues



DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	➤ <b>CYCLE 6 → Day 1</b> → Epirubicin Injection + IV Fluids followed by Cisplatin infusion + 5FU infusion begins
	<b>Days 2 - 7</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 8-14</b> → 5FU Infusion continues
	<b>Days 15-21</b> → 5FU Infusion continues

- Blood tests will be done weekly - before day 1 of every cycle and before each 5FU Infusor connection. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and / or other side effects.
- You may also need other medications to help lessen any side effects you have with your treatments. For example, you will be prescribed medications to prevent nausea and vomiting. The anti-nausea prescriptions are to be filled at your drugstore. Bring these with you to take before each IV treatment on Day 1 of each cycle. It is easier to prevent nausea than stop it once it has occurred.
- You may be asked to drink water on the morning of your treatment (2-3 cups), Also, following your treatment you may be asked to drink plenty of liquids (8-12 cups a day). This helps prevent kidney problems that can be caused by Cisplatin.

## **SIDE EFFECTS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM**

Unexpected and unlikely side effects can occur with any drug treatment. The ones listed below are particularly important for you to be aware of as they are directly related to the common actions of the drugs in your treatment plan.

<b><u>SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS</u></b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<p><b>Cisplatin and Epirubicin burn</b> if they leak under the skin.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse or doctor <b><i>immediately</i></b> if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drugs are being given.</p>
<p><b>Allergic reactions</b> may <b>rarely</b> occur. Signs of an allergic reaction are dizziness, feeling faint, confusion, shortness of breath, and wheezing. This may occur immediately or several hours after receiving the drugs. It can occur after the first dose or after many doses.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving the drugs or contact your doctor immediately if this happens after you leave the clinic.</p>
<p>Your <b>white blood cells</b> may start to decrease one week after your treatment. They protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, <b>you are at greater risk of getting an infection.</b></p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <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> </ul> <p>CALL your doctor <b><i>immediately</i></b> at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an mouth thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine (when you pee).</p>
<p><b>Serious bleeding problems</b> may rarely occur. Signs are black, tarry stools, blood in the urine, pinpoint red spots on the skin and extensive bruising.</p>	<p>See your doctor or get emergency help <b><i>immediately</i></b> if these occur.</p>
<p><b>Blood clots</b> may rarely occur. Signs that may indicate a stroke are a sudden onset of severe headache, eyesight changes, slurred speech, loss of coordination, and weakness or numbness in an arm or leg. You may also experience tenderness or hardness over a vein, swelling and tenderness of the lower leg, sudden onset of cough, chest pain or shortness of breath.</p>	<p>See your doctor or get emergency help <b><i>immediately</i></b> if these occur.</p>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Pain or tenderness</b> may occur where the needle was placed.</p>	<p>Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day</p>
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> can occur with this treatment and you will need to take anti-nausea drugs. This is very common.</p>	<p>You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea drugs to take before your IV treatment and afterwards at home. <b>It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it has occurred</b>, so follow the directions closely.</p> <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>.**</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hair loss</b> is common and may begin within a few days or weeks of treatment. Your hair may thin or you may become totally bald. Your scalp may feel tender. You may lose hair on your face and body. Your hair will grow back once your treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<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> <li>• Protect your scalp with a hat, scarf or wig in cold weather. Some extended health plans will pay part of the cost of a wig.</li> <li>• Cover your head or apply sunscreen on sunny days.</li> <li>• Apply mineral oil to your scalp to reduce itching.</li> <li>• If you lose your eyelashes and eyebrows, protect your eyes from dust and grit with a broad-rimmed hat and glasses.</li> </ul>
<p>Your <b>platelets</b> may start to decrease one week after your treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. <b>You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</b> This is very common. They usually return to normal 30 days after your last treatment.</p>	<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>• Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily.</li> </ul>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Sore mouth</b> may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. This is very common.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste.</li> <li>• Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas for a Sore Mouth during Chemotherapy</i>.**</li> <li>• Tell your doctor if you have a sore mouth, as your chemotherapy doses may need to be decreased if mouth sores are severe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Diarrhea</b> may occur very commonly.</p>	<p>If diarrhea is a problem:</p> <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>.**</li> </ul>
<p>Fatigue, <b>unusual tiredness</b> or weakness may occur commonly. As the number of treatment cycles increase, fatigue may get worse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Your Bank of Energy Savings: How People with Cancer Can Handle Fatigue</i>.**</li> <li>• Let your doctor or nurse know if you continue to feel more tired than usual.</li> <li>• Your energy level will improve with time after treatment is completed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kidney problems</b> may rarely occur. Signs are lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.</p>	<p>CALL your doctor <b>as soon as possible</b> during office hours if these occur.</p>
<p><b>Heart or lung problems</b> may very rarely occur. Signs are a fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fainting.</p>	<p>CALL your doctor <b>as soon as possible</b> during office hours if these occur.</p>
<p><b>Hearing problems</b> such as ringing in the ears or a decrease in hearing may occur commonly.</p>	<p>Let your doctor or nurse know if you are experiencing any changes in your hearing.</p>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<b>Numbness or tingling in the feet or hands or painful leg cramps</b> may occur commonly.	Let your doctor or nurse know if you are experiencing these symptoms.
<b>Skin reactions such as Hand-Foot Syndrome</b> may rarely occur. Signs are redness, peeling, tingling, numbness, swelling or blistering of the palms of your hands and/or bottoms of your feet.	Let your doctor or nurse know if you are experiencing these symptoms.
<b>Loss of appetite and change in the way things taste</b> may occur and may persist long after the Fluorouracil is discontinued.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i> .**
Your skin may <b>sunburn</b> easily. This occurs very rarely.	<p>To help prevent sunburn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid direct sunlight and tanning salons.</li> <li>• Wear a hat, long sleeves, and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days.</li> <li>• Wear a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Apply liberally, 30 minutes before exposure. Reapply every 2 hours and after swimming.</li> <li>• Consult the <i>BC Health Guide</i> or your community pharmacist for more information.</li> </ul>

\* very common (more than 50 %), common (20-50%), uncommon (10-20%), rare (5-10%), very rare (less than 5 %)

**\*\*Let your nurse or dietician know if you are interested in any of the pamphlets mentioned above.**

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PATIENT**

Do not be surprised if your urine is pink or reddish for 1-2 days after your treatment. This is expected as Epirubicin is red and is passed in your urine.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs. Other drugs such as Warfarin (COUMADIN®), Furosemide (LASIX®), Phenytoin (DILANTIN®), Cimetidine (TAGAMET®) and Verapamil (CHRONOVERA®, ISOPTIN®) may interact with this treatment. You may need to have extra blood

