



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: GIENACTRT

Treatment of esophageal and gastroesophageal cancer, prior to surgery, using Carboplatin, Paclitaxel and Radiation Therapy.

GIE = Gastrointestinal, Esophageal
NA = NeoAdjuvant (before surgery)
CT = Carboplatin, Paclitaxel
RT = Radiation Therapy

ABOUT THIS MEDICATION

What is this treatment used for?

- Carboplatin and paclitaxel are drugs used in the treatment of esophagus and stomach-esophageal cancer.
- Radiation therapy is a very effective therapy used to kill cancer cells by directing high-energy X-rays beams to a specific area of the body.

How does this treatment work?

- Carboplatin and paclitaxel work by interfering with dividing cells and preventing an increase in the number of cells.
- Radiation also works by interfering with dividing cells by either killing them or stopping the cells from growing and reproducing.
- Both carboplatin and paclitaxel act as a “radio-sensitizer” to the radiation treatments. That is, the drugs make the cancer cells more sensitive to the killing effect of the radiation. This is why the two types of treatment (radiation and chemotherapy) are used together at the same time.
- The drugs and radiation therapy are also given before surgery to enhance the overall benefits of treatment.

INTENDED BENEFITS

- You are being asked to take carboplatin, paclitaxel and radiation therapy as a treatment to reduce the risk of recurrence of your cancer.
- “Neoadjuvant” therapy means this treatment is being given before an additional type of treatment, such as surgery.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

How are these drugs given?

- Carboplatin and paclitaxel are given directly into the vein (IV).
- You will receive your drugs at the clinic, by the chemotherapy nurse, once a week for 5 weeks in a row. Treatments will last about **two and a half to three hours**. Your first treatment will probably take longer, as the nurse will review information on the chemotherapy drugs with you.

How is radiation therapy given?

- Radiation therapy is offered at each of the six regional BC Cancer Centres.
- Prior to starting treatment, you will attend the cancer centre to have your treatment planned. A CT scanner will take images which the radiation oncologist and radiation therapist will use to custom plan your treatment.
- Your treatment will start a few days after your planning appointment.
- A machine called a linear accelerator is used to generate and give the high energy x-rays.
- Radiation treatments are given every day of the week except weekends and holidays.

The calendar below outlines your overall treatment plan.

DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
	Radiation: 23 to 28 fractions, 5 days per week
	▶ Week 1 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day → carboplatin IV x 1 day
	▶ Week 2 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day → carboplatin IV x 1 day
	▶ Week 3 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day → carboplatin IV x 1 day
	▶ Week 4 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day → carboplatin IV x 1 day
	▶ Week 5 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day → carboplatin IV x 1 day
	Surgery

What will happen when I get my drugs?

- A **blood test** is done each week, on or before each day of treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on your blood counts or other side effects.
- You will be given medication to help prevent an allergic reaction to paclitaxel. This is usually given by the chemotherapy nurse, just before your treatment. The medications are given directly into the vein (IV).

What will happen when I get radiation?

- Radiation treatments are delivered every day of the week except weekends and holidays.
- The length of your treatment appointment will be approximately 15 minutes, but you will be receiving radiation for only a few minutes.
- While the radiation is being given, the radiation therapists will not be in the room with you. They will be watching you on a video camera and you can talk with them over the microphone.
- You will not feel anything during the radiation treatments.

SIDE EFFECTS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

Chemotherapy

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.

Your doctor will review the risks of treatment and possible side effects with you before starting treatment. The chemotherapy nurse will review possible side effects of paclitaxel and carboplatin and how to manage those side effects with you on the day you receive your first treatment.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
Allergic reactions commonly occur with paclitaxel. Signs of an allergic reaction may include flushing, rash, dizziness, breathing problems, abdominal or back pain. This can occur immediately or several hours after receiving paclitaxel and usually only with the first or second dose.	Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving paclitaxel or contact your oncologist immediately if this happens after you leave the clinic.
Paclitaxel burns if it leaks under the skin.	Tell your nurse or doctor immediately if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.
Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment and may last for 24 hours.	You may be given a prescription for anti-nausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred , so follow directions closely. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink plenty of fluids.• Eat and drink often in small amounts• Try the ideas in <i>Practical Tips to Manage Nausea</i>*
Your white blood cells may decrease after your treatment. They usually return to normal after your last treatment. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.	To help prevent infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom.• Take care of your skin and mouth.• Avoid crowds and people who are sick.• Call your doctor immediately at the 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.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
<p>Sore mouth may sometimes occur. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day. • Try soft, bland foods like puddings, milkshakes and cream soups. • Avoid spicy, crunchy or acidic food, and very hot or cold foods. • Try ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Try with a Sore Mouth*</i>

***Please ask your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist for a copy of this handout.**

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
<p>Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.</p>	<p>Apply warm compresses or soak in warm water for 15 – 20 minutes several times a day.</p>
<p>Muscle or joint pain may commonly occur a few days after your treatment.</p>	<p>You may take acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) every 4 – 6 hours to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day or ibuprofen (e.g. ADVIL®) for mild to moderate pain. Tell Your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.</p>
<p>Fever may sometimes occur shortly after treatment with paclitaxel. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) every 4 – 6 hours to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day. • Fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer) which occurs more than 48 hours after treatment may be a sign of an infection. Report this to your doctor immediately. See “white blood cells” above.

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
<p>Your platelets may decrease after your treatment. They usually return to normal before your next treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene. <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"> • Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g. ASA for your heart) • For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) first, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.
<p>Diarrhea may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>If diarrhea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of fluids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Eat low fibre foods & avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Choices to Help Manage Diarrhea</i> *
<p>Constipation may sometimes occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise if you can. • Drink plenty of fluids. • Try ideas in <i>Suggestions for Dealing with Constipation</i>. *
<p>Tiredness and lack of energy may commonly occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Try the ideas in handout titled <i>Fatigue/Tiredness</i> *.
<p>Hair loss may occur, due to paclitaxel. Your hair may thin or you may lose it completely. Your scalp may feel tender. Hair loss may occur on your face and body. 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"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms. • If hair loss is a problem, refer to Resources for Hair Loss and Appearance Changes *.
<p>Numbness or tingling of the fingers or toes may occur. This will slowly return to normal once your treatments are over. This may take several months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be careful when handling items that are sharp, hot or cold. • Tell your doctor at your next visit, especially if you have trouble with buttons, writing, or picking up small objects.

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
Skin rashes may sometimes occur.	To help itching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can use calamine lotion. • If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours. • Otherwise mention it at your next visit.
Loss of appetite may occur.	Try the ideas in <i>Food ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite*</i>
Swelling of hands, feet, or lower legs may sometimes occur if your body retains extra fluid.	If swelling is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your feet when sitting. • Avoid tight clothing.

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

Radiation Therapy

- Prior to starting treatment, your radiation oncologist and radiation therapist will provide you with information on the side effects you may experience. You will also be provided with information on how to manage these side effects.
- The most common side effects are difficulty eating and swallowing, fatigue and nausea. The radiation therapists will assess you daily.
- Once a week you will be scheduled to meet with your radiation oncologist which will mean you will be at the cancer centre a little longer.
- Nurses, dietitians and other health care professionals are available to help support you during treatment.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PATIENT

- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to cisplatin (PLATINOL®, PLATINOL-AQ®), mannitol or paclitaxel before starting this treatment.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of treatment.
- Carboplatin may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with carboplatin.
- Paclitaxel and carboplatin may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with these drugs. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- Tell doctors, dentist, and other health professionals that you are being treated with paclitaxel and carboplatin before you receive any treatment from them.

Medication Interactions:

- Other drugs such as disulfiram (ANTABUSE®) and metronidazole (FLAGYL®) may interact with paclitaxel.
- Other drugs such as phenytoin (DILANTIN®) may interact with carboplatin.
- Other drugs such as warfarin (COUMADIN®) may interact with both paclitaxel and carboplatin.

Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changes. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start or stop taking any other drugs.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS VERY IMPORTANT

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

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, abdominal pain or breathing problems.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100° F or 38° C by an oral thermometer); shaking chills; severe sore throat; cough; cloudy or foul smelling urine; pain or burning when passing 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.
- Signs of a **blood clot** such as tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf swelling and tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- Signs of **heart or lung problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing swelling of feet or lower legs, or fainting.
- **Uncontrolled** nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs, numbness or tingling in feet or hands.
- **Changes in eyesight.**
- Ringing in your ears or **hearing problems.**
- **Skin rash or itching.**
- **Stomach pain** not controlled by antacids or acetaminophen.

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Taste changes may occur.
- Uncontrolled constipation.
- Headache not controlled with acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®)
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Nail changes.
- Abdominal discomfort including pain, bloating or cramping.
- Skin irritation where you may have had radiation treatments.

If you experience symptoms or changes in your body that have not been described above but worry you, or if any symptoms are severe, contact:

_____ at telephone number: _____